MANY GIFTS · ONE SPIRIT

journey

JUNE/JULY 1983

UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

5300 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 304, Los Angeles, California 90029 (213) 464-5100

July 11, 1983

Dear Sisters & Brothers:

It is with joy that I welcome you, for the Board of Elders, to the 11th General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

We, of the Board of Elders, praise God as we look at the growth that has taken place within our denomination over these last two years. It is unbelieveable as we look back on the history of our Fellowship and realize that this October we will be celebrating our 15th anniversary -- 15 years of growth which has given us so much joy and opportunity for service. We who are members of this Exodus Church, still journey towards the promised land -- the promised land that will take us into the larger Body of Christ; the promised land where we can live in peace and harmony with our neighbors of all faiths; a promised land where we can worship God after the dictates of our own hearts and not fear persecution; a promised land where truly Christ is Sovereign.

The theme of our General Conference this year really tells the story of our success in Jesus Christ. We follow the Spirit of Christ. That "One Spirit, Many Gifts" that God has abundantly given us with which to work to bring about God's Realm on earth.

With a sense of peace and love, we welcome you to Toronto, Canada.

In Christ,

FOR THE BOARD OF ELDERS

Reverend Elder Troy D. Perry
Moderator

Rev. Troy D. Perry

The Reverend Troy D. Perry, Founder

journey

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INSIDE

2 *Welcome to Toronto*
3 *AIDS*
4 *GC XI Schedule*
6 *Profile: Greg Cutts*
8 *Chaplain's Corner*
9 *Can I?*
10 *Our Ministry to NCC*
11 *NCC Dialogue*
11 *God Makes Room*
12 *FFO*
14 *EXCEL*
15 *Substance Abuse*
16 *Christian Anti-Semitism*
18 *GSS*
19 *Locating A Pastor*
20 *Christian Social Action*
22 *Samaritan Extended Studies*
23 *Fellowship News*
26 *Demonstration*
26 *Samaritan*
27 *AVE*
28 *World Church Extension*
30 *Commission on the Laity*
COVER: Jean Gralley

AIDS: A Pastoral, Ethical Response

by Ken Martin
Pastor, MCC in the Valley

First, a very close friend, who is also a clergyperson in UFMCC, called to tell me he had been given a "preliminary diagnosis of AIDS." Less than two weeks later I conducted the funeral service of a 29 year old victim of AIDS. His family chose not to even acknowledge the service. Two days later an active member of our church came into my office to tell me he had AIDS. On Easter Sunday a long time friend, and partner in ministry at Good Shepherd Parish MCC in Chicago, came to me and said, "I just came to say 'good-bye' and tell you 'I love you.' " Three weeks later he was dead of AIDS. I participated in his funeral service at MCCLA.

What do we in UFMCC say in response to this threat and horror called AIDS? In addition to keeping ourselves informed regarding the information from the Center for Disease Control, other research programs, the sensitivity and awareness of medical professionals in our respective areas, and the local and national AIDS support groups within our own communities, should we as a unique and spiritual body begin formulating an equally unique and spiritual response? I believe the answer is yes. As a people whose every action and decision must be guided and informed by the Good News that God was present in Jesus Christ and continues that presence with us through the Holy Spirit, we must bring the same innovative and creative energy to this issue that we are attempting to bring to so many others with which we are faced.

I would like for the remainder of this article to be seen as nothing more than a beginning. The four points of departure which I shall discuss are, to me, crucial. However, they are in no way exhaustive. I invite other persons within UFMCC to revise and augment them.

Seeing this, therefore, as the beginning of a process, I would like to suggest that we internalize and actualize *at least* the following four awarenesses in our response.

First, *we must remain a sex-positive people.*

AIDS VICTIM: "I should have known that God would punish me. I was having too much fun."

One of the most tragic mistakes we could make would be to become a sex-negative people, even inadvertantly. Both in language and attitude we must avoid any indication that AIDS is in any way a "plague" or "punishment" being visited upon us because of our sexuality. Instead, it *is* a time for an intense and personal evaluation, on the part of Gay males, of our sexual patterns, and caution and restraint in activities known to put one at increased risk.

Two thousand years of ignorance, fear, guilt and shame regarding human sexuality (to say nothing of homosexuality) is just *beginning* to be reversed within Christian thought, writings and practice. I believe that the existence and witness of UFMCC has been an inextricable factor in this reversal. To abdicate that influence now, an influence I believe God has *clearly* called us to, would constitute sin on our parts.

Second, *we must create spiritual support systems for victims, spouses, families and friends.*

SPOUSE OF AIDS VICTIM: "Our friends were afraid to come to the hospital. Toward the end, they wouldn't even come to the house. They didn't even call but I think that was because they felt guilty."

continued on page 29

CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

General Conference XI Toronto, Ontario, Canada
UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES
July 11-17, 1983

		ACTIVITIES
MONDAY, JULY 11		
8.30 - 9:45	OPENING WORSHIP SERVICE	
10:00 - 11:15	PRELIMINARIES C.O.L. FORUM Nominating Committee Clergy Forum Finance Committee	2:00 - 4:00 UFMCC TODAY SEMINAR
11:30 - 12:30	BUSINESS SESSION (Seating of delegates, procedural matters)	FAITH, FELLOWSHIP AND ORDER WORKSHOPS
2.00 - 4:30	BUSINESS (Address by Rev. Perry, Elders Forum)	
4:30 - 5:30	GSS FORUM	
7:30	WORSHIP SERVICE	
SHARING THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT		
WOMEN'S SHARING		
TUESDAY, JULY 12		
8.30 - 9:15	WORSHIP SERVICE	9:30 - 11:30 THE EXCEL EXPERIENCE
9:30 - 11:30	BUSINESS SESSION	
11:45 - 1:00	FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARINGS ALL COMMISSION AND COMMITTEE HEARINGS	10:00 - 12:00 TOUR OF TORONTO THE EXCEL EXPERIENCE
2:00 - 5:00	BUSINESS SESSION	
7:30	WORSHIP SERVICE	
HOSPITALITY:	THIRD WORLD OUTREACH	2:30 - 4:30
SHARING THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT		THE EXCEL EXPERIENCE
WEDNESDAY, JULY 13		
8:30 - 9:15	WORSHIP SERVICE	10:00 - 12:00 INTERNATIONAL SHARING
9:30 - 12:00	BUSINESS SESSION	
1:00 - 2:30	FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARINGS (FINAL)	1:30 - 3:30
1:00 - 3:00	BUSINESS SESSION (ONLY IF NEEDED)	SHARING TIME FOR THIRD WORLD PEOPLE
3:30 - 6:00	ELDERS NOMINATING COMMITTEE FORUM	
7:30	WORSHIP SERVICE	2:00 - 4:00
HOSPITALITY	JIM GLYER'S OPEN DISCUSSION ON "ANOTHER CALL" CLERGY CARE STUDENT CLERGY WITH CCCC	SUCCESSFUL CHURCH MUSIC PROGRAM

CONFERENCE

THURSDAY, JULY 14

8:30 - 9:15	WORSHIP SERVICE
9:30 - 10:15	ADDRESS BY DR. VIRGINIA MOLLENKOTT
10:45 - 3:30	MAJOR SEMINARS MOLLENKOTT EASTMAN DEACON AND BOYD BULL
4:00 - 5:00	BUSINESS SESSION FORUM ON THE BUDGET
7:30	WORSHIP SERVICE SHARING THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT C.O.L. HOSPITALITY Jim Glyer's Discussion Continued

FRIDAY, JULY 15

		ACTIVITIES
8:30 - 9.15	WORSHIP SERVICE	
9:30 - 12:00	BUSINESS SESSION	10:00 - 12:00 WOMEN'S SHARING,
1:30 - 3:30	BUSINESS SESSION	MEN'S SHARING 1:30 - 3:00 SAMARITAN EDUCATION CENTER
7:30	WORSHIP SERVICE SHARING THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT	FFO WORKSHOP III

SATURDAY, JULY 16

8:30 - 9:15	WORSHIP SERVICE	10:00 - 12:00
9:30 - 11:00	BUSINESS SESSION (ONLY IF NEEDED)	JEFF PULLING'S & JIM GLYER'S DISCUSSION ON "HELPING CLERGY PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY"
10:30 - 1:30	CHURCH AND COMMISSION FAIR	
2:30 - 4:00	HUMAN RIGHTS RALLY AND CELEBRATION (ENTERTAINMENT, AWARDS CEREMONY)	
7:30	WORSHIP SERVICE SHARING THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT	
10:00	DANCE	

SUNDAY, JULY 17

10:30 - 12:00	WORSHIP SERVICE

Profile

We gathered together on Tuesday, May 31, 1983 at 8 p.m. at MCC Los Angeles to honor our brother Greg Cutts who died on May 24, 1983 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Greg is survived by his spouse Rev. Troy D. Perry.

The following are the words spoken by Rev. Nancy Wilson.

In Memoriam

by Nancy Wilson
Clerk, Board of Elders

Tonight I want us to spend a few moments remembering the gift of the life of Greg Cutts. I'm a preacher and a trinitarian, so out of all the things that could be said, I'll choose three:

Greg was a "new man," in an emerging new age. He described himself as a male feminist. For him that meant he knew and felt the pain of the sin of sexism, and how it had hurt him, women and men, and our relationships to each other.

He saw how destructive false masculinity is; and his life was dedicated to learning how to be a Gay man -- free to be a full, whole human being. I know that his deep commitment to being this new kind of man blessed your life, Troy, and the lives of his friends, men and women. I loved him for this, and for his gentle, supportive relationship with De Colores MCC.

Greg was a passionate person – never lukewarm about anything. In Revelations 3, in the letter to Laodicea, it talks about being neither hot nor cold. Greg was *always* hot or cold about life, not lukewarm. He was passionate about his art, his faith, about you, Troy, about dancing.

I can see him tearing apart the Fellowship Offices looking for that one perfect picture. Or arguing fiercely with friends about art or politics. Not afraid to stand up for himself or his opinions. Not afraid to stand up to you, Troy. I can see Greg crying for joy in church, or just letting out a wonderfully cleansing scream! He was, as passionate people often are, single-minded about wanting the best for himself, for God, for the Fellowship.

I remember Greg sharing with me about the joy of dancing all night in San Francisco with Randy Cypherd and friends. The joy of being with his Gay brothers energized him. I know that Greg was a delight and joy to you, Troy. All of us who know you knew that and rejoiced with you in your joy. And now we sorrow in your sorrow.

Greg was a visionary. A seeker of truth. He was a *visual* person. If "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Greg's faith was a process of seeing and dreaming. I know that he envisioned that television show, in its completed state. His work was to make sure *we* all got to see what he saw.

I remember him coming to me, maybe six months ago, a little shaken and worried. He had had a vision and was afraid folks

Greg Cutts (1953 - 1983) with his spouse, Troy Perry

would think he was crazy. All I could do was hold his hand and listen. It was after one of our peculiar L.A. stormy nights. The vision he had was of great changes, transformations - a vision of the future, of death and new life, of great earth-shaking changes. Looking back on it now, maybe what happened to Greg was that he was given a special glimpse of heaven, "a foretaste of glory divine."

Greg's vision reminds me of another visionary nearly 2,000 years ago. John of Patmos might certainly have been thought a little crazy as he recorded this vision from Revelation 21:

"And then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a spouse for their lover; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with humanity. God will dwell with them, and they shall be God's people, and God will be with them; God will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying from pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.' And the one who sat on the throne said, 'Behold I make all things new.' "

Also it was said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." And God said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment."

When we first received the news of Greg's death, Troy, you talked about how the meeting with the National Council of Churches Governing Board in San Francisco just two weeks before had been one of the highlights of your ministry. It seemed incredible that such joy and tragedy could happen so close together. Our experience there was summarized by a woman from MCC San Jose, who wrote in their newsletter, "Our communion service was, as usual, a time of special sharing and you know, it seemed like *everyone* went up to that altar. During the communion service, I found myself watching through a haze of grateful tears, all the wonderfully diverse Gay and non-Gay people sharing God's love and I imagined that this is what heaven must be like . . ."

You and I, Troy, and others of us there had a glimpse of heaven. It was the same heaven that Greg saw. Greg's life itself was a glimpse of heaven for us – a glimpse of that new heaven and that new earth.

If there is anything we live for, it is to be pictures, images, signs of that coming new heaven and earth.

Greg was such a sign. Let us honor him by being those signs for each other.

The following is an excerpt from a sermon by Rev. Elder Jeri Ann Harvey which was given in honor of Greg Cutts.

BY JERI ANN HARVEY
MEMBER, BOARD OF ELDERS
PASTOR, MCC LOS ANGELES

Greg Cutts was a member of the Gospel Choir you have been hearing tonight. They sang tonight in honor of God and in memory of our Brother Greg. Greg was Canadian and he was proud of that, and he was by all intent and purposes a Los Angeleno. He fell in love in this city, and he learned to love its people.

Troy Perry is a hard act to follow. Greg was a very special man because he cast his own shadow and never stood in the shadow of Troy Perry. That takes a very special person to do that, and Greg was indeed that very special person.

Greg had a real stirring in his soul. He knew that he had accepted Jesus, but he wanted something. There was something he was really looking for. And it was in MCC LA that he had one of the most beautiful charismatic experiences I've ever seen in my life. The love and the joy of Jesus Christ exuded from every pore of that young man's body. It was like he was sitting on an electric hot plate. He couldn't sit still, he couldn't stand still. And he learned a whole new language. It was called "Hallelujah! Thank You Jesus!" And he took it back to Canada and they thought for sure he had turned foreign on them. Some of the friends that he had were non believers. They called themselves pagans. All of a sudden this friend of theirs came back with this new language and it started driving some of them absolutely crazy. They said, "What is all this God talk?" He said, "I thought you'd never ask!" He sat them down to really tell them about it and witness about Jesus Christ and the goodness and mercy of God in his life. They were amazed. Some of them were angry. Some of them couldn't deal with it. Some of them are beginning to deal with it now!

Some of us met Greg for the first time at General Conference in Houston. He was staying in the suite of rooms with our Brother Troy D. and Joe McDuffey was there. The Elders were going to Troy's room so Troy said, "Greg! You've got to go out the back door. The Elders are on their way up!" Greg put his hands on his hips and looked Troy right in the face and he said, "Troy. You brought me in the front door of this hotel room and I'm not going out any other way!! The Elders will just have to get used to it!" And we did! In a hurry! We were in awe. Greg had an incredible sense of humor. He had an incredible love. When his immigration term had been filled here and he had to go back to Canada and there were things to be done on the TV production, Greg went back with a heavy heart but eager to be able to return to the U.S.

Greg and Troy had a very special relationship. They had a very special, very real, very loving, very caring relationship. You know, there was a relationship in scripture that your relationship with Greg reminded me of, Troy. "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. Ye daughters of Israel weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights; who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Oh, Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen and their weapons of war perished!" (II Samuel 23-27).

We come here tonight with pride in our hearts and we can stand before the altar of God and lay our dead in honor, and we can know that we have the resurrection of Jesus Christ in our lives because no lie of Satan will ever take that away from us again.

The time may come, Troy, in your humanness, when you will say, "Why God?" Because all of us who knew Greg and loved him have asked, "Why God?" He just turned 30 on March 5th. He was so vibrant . Greg touched all of our lives in such a positive dynamic way. He became a part of each one of us, in such a personal way. And I want to say Why? Why? But God is the Alpha and Omega. And God knows all the tomorrows. You and I cannot know what Greg's tomorrow would have been. But praise God you and I know what his tomorrow is now. And we know the faith that this young man had, and the witness that this young man has been and

continued on page 31

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

by Nancy Radclyffe

Collective Writer and Senior Chaplain

HOPES, EXPECTATIONS & SURVIVAL

The ability to hope is integral to positive mental health and therefore, to survival. Humanity's capacity to anticipate a better future has probably kept us from annihilitating one another before now. A hope is a desire for something which is accompanied by expectations. For centuries the Hebrew people carried the hope that their Messiah would come. They missed the hoped for One because of their expectations about this Savior. Jesus, the Messiah, was not the royal, high born personage of their expectations.

We are every bit as susceptible to falling prey to our expectations as the Hebrew people. Whether it is in major life-changing events or in every day matters, we frequently run afoul because our anticipation of what will happen does not match what really occurs. Too often we are hurt, thrown into confusion with our hopes dashed because reality did not meet with what we expected.

An expectation is a prospect of good to come. If "expectations" and "hopes" have such positive connotations how may we use them so they benefit us? A starting point is to realize that we all accumulate expectations. We pre-conceive what our new pastorate will be like, how the new pastor will meet or fail to meet our ideals, how General or District Conference or Clergy Retreat will be *the* place to be healed, to meet a new lover, to have a good time, to get our pet project, motion, etc. approved. By recognizing that we do build up expectations we can then honestly look at them before the event or encounter and at least know what they are. From there we can evaluate how much is dream with little or no concrete basis in fact and how much we may more reliably depend on because it is based on some reality.

Since General Conference is the theme of this issue of *JOURNEY* let us use it as an example of how this might work. The reality is that General Conference is held to conduct the business of the Fellowship. A second primary purpose is to worship and pray together. Lay and Clergy delegates who go to General Conference "expecting" to work and to worship will probably not be disappointed. Those who have major expectations of being healed, finding a lover, being footloose and fancy free, etc. may well be crushed.

Likewise, those who attend General Conference as observers and/or spouses of one of these delegates may well be disappointed to find the numerous work sessions, planned and impromtu. These will mean little time to relax with a beloved spouse, or fewer seminars, workshops and planned recreation for the one who is not a delegate. How do you make friends or meet a love when everyone's busy and there are few or no fun places to be' How can you hear someone's healing words if they do not ever have the time to realize you need them?

How might these expectations and hopes that do not meet the primary purposes of an event still have some hope of being met? Recognize these expectations and hopes for what they are. Because they do not meet the primary purposes of General Conference we are "expecting" a miracle. We can facilitate miracles in several ways. Accept that God does want good for you.

Then, before arriving, perhaps while traveling, have an honest chat with God about your expectations and maybe even ask for God's assistance in putting them into perspective as well as in meeting them. In asking for a miracle recognize that humanity, in some way is always a co-worker or co-partner with God in miracle making. Look at Jesus' miracles – the woman moved and dared enough to touch His hem, the friends cared enough to take action to lower the man through the roof, many asked for themselves or others and believed, still others followed the directions Jesus gave.

All need to become co-partners in miracle making with God, put feet on our prayers and action behind our expectations. You will not be the only one at General Conference who needs a friend – to make a friend, initiate by being the first to be a friend. Is there a need for healing? In this as in all expectations look to God for your fulfillment. "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise God, my Savior and my God." (Ps. 12:5 NIV).

Hope, trust and most importantly be open to God's leading so you may find your healing, so you may have the strength to be a co-worker with God, to act in your own behalf. Consider too that there are sisters and brothers who need healing and as you facilitate that healing or hope you may find yourself being healed in the process. As ministers, lay and clergy, our best healing is often just the reassurance that we can indeed still minister. Be open to the Spirit working through you for you and for others.

Rev. Nancy Radclyffe
Spiritual Life and Clergy Care Center
P.O. Box 3004
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If you think you need to talk to someone, write to the above address or call (305) 894-1081.

CAN I ?

by Bob Arthur
Collective Writer

How many times do we hear the question, "As a Christian, can I . . . ?" All kinds of advice is sought and given in that format. Yet my understanding of the New Testament seems to preclude our giving direct answers to these questions. Paul wrote the book of Galatians to warn that we Christians should not put outselves back under law. The law was given to show us our need of Christ, but now that Christianity is here, we are no longer under the law (Galatians 3:23-24). We preachers wax eloquently on that principle as it touches the Old Testament laws and homosexuality. Yet there is a tendency to try to put our people under other laws sometimes referred to as a moral code, or Christian principles.

We recognize that Jesus gave us two laws to live by: love God, and love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30-31). These are the only laws that we as Christians are responsible for. Yet we hear many people teach that we must not behave in an unchristian manner by going to the baths, having open relationships, getting involved in S & M etc. In fact these teachings are so common that I know many pastors who wouldn't dare go to the baths in their own city, but travel to neighboring cities to involve themselves in such activities. How hypocritical can we get?

Now I realize that those who teach such things believe they are just applying the principles of Christ's two laws to every day living, and explain how these prohibitions are squarely based upon those two laws. However, the Pharisees of Jesus' time did the same thing with their teachings. For example, the Old Testament law prohibited working on the Sabbath Day. Now that law seems simple enough until we begin to look at details. Just what is work? For instance, since travel was difficult in those days, it was considered work. Yet one had to travel to the synagogue on the Sabbath for services, so that couldn't be work. So the Pharisees defined travelling as work if it exceeded the distance one had to travel to get from home to the synagogue (a Sabbath Day's journey). But now, there is a need to define home. Home is where your possessions are. Therefore one might not travel further than a Sabbath Day's journey from one's possessions on the Sabbath. So if someone knew that a trip was necessary on a Sabbath Day, that person could leave possessions along the way at intervals equivalent to their Sabbath Day's journey. Therefore, never being further from some possession (home), that person could make a trip of indefinite length on the Sabbath.

We can begin to see the way in which the Pharisees added to the laws of the Old Testament with good intentions that went astray. Jesus spent an awful lot of time condemning the Pharisees for what they were doing with the law (Mark 7:1-13; Matthew 23:13-33). Are we becoming the modern day Pharisees by adding to the laws of Christ with good intentions that have gone astray?

Jesus and Paul did a great deal of expounding upon the two laws of Christ. Why aren't we satisfied with their interpretations, and find it necessary to add to them? Three words commonly found in the vocabulary of Jesus and Paul are lust, adultery and fornication. We have gotten into a lot of trouble trying to define those words to meet our own feelings of what Christian moral principles are.

Just what is lust? A dictionary definition is "perverted love, or inordinate desire." So we define lust for our lives as a desire for anything we don't think a person should want, such as a lot of money, or more sexual encounters than we think proper. But if we read Romans 1, we soon find a Scriptural definition as a love of the creature more than the Creator. This makes lust an individual definition, not an objective measuring stick. If we love anything more than God who gave it to us, this is lust. Does this mean that if we want a sexual encounter more than three times per week we are lusting? For some, maybe, but for others, probably not. It depends on the relative love of sex versus our love for God who gave us the gift of sex.

The traditional church definition of adultery is the sexual act performed outside of wedlock by a married person. Fornication is also defined as the sexual act performed outside of wedlock by an unmarried person. By these definitions, it is impossible for a single person to commit adultery, and equally impossible for a married person to commit fornication. But then we read Matthew 19:9, where Jesus tells us the only grounds for divorce is fornication. Is Jesus being facetious? Is he giving a basis for divorce that is impossible to occur, since a married person cannot commit fornication? I hardly think so. Then just what is adultery and fornication?

Both words in Greek are political terms. Adultery (Moicheia) is simply breaking a promise. That can be a promise of sexual fidelity, or a promise to do the dishes. If we break a promise, we are committing adultery, and violating the law of Christ which says to love our neighbor as much as ourselves. Fornication (porneia) is the use or abuse of another person to satisfy one's own needs or desires with no regard for the other person's needs or desires. An example of fornication might be the forcing of one's spouse into sexual activity he/she doesn't desire at the moment. This fornication is a violation of Christ's law demanding love of neighbor as self, and is grounds for divorce.

Understanding these definitions, is it possible for one to go to the baths, have an open relationship, or get involved in S & M without committing lust, adultery or fornication? Only the individual can answer these questions for his/her own self. When we begin to presume to give advice in this area, do we fall object of the condemnation of Romans 2:1? Next time someone asks, "Can I, as a Christian . . . .," let us be careful not to make judgments, but rather answer by teaching the laws of Christ: love God, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Support our Fellowship
educational ministries

Our ministry to National Council continues

by Paula Jean Schoenwether
COLLECTIVE EDITOR

Meeting with the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ in San Francisco last month will be an experience I will not soon forget. Because this was my third encounter with this body, I knew pretty much what to expect. I had also begun to make some friends so I felt a little more comfortable than I had at previous meetings. This, however, did not lower the stress level. I still felt on display as a L-E-S-B-I-A-N.

The week was not without pain and anger and frustration. There were times when we had to quietly sit and listen to report after report which explained why we couldn't organize a church based on our sexuality or why homosexuality is a sin and why we shouldn't be admitted to the council. Words such as anthropological and ecclesiology (I even learned how to say them) were used as often as we use the words Lesbian and Gay.

It was all too apparent that changes were occuring in front of our eyes and these changes would affect all of Christendom.

When I heard us judged and condemned and dismissed by these reports the anger churned inside me. Before my anger had time to explode I was hearing another report. This report was from another perspective. A representative from the NCC's Faith and Order Commission was passionately speaking of our ministry and of the words Jesus spoke about loving our neighbor. My anger subsided. It was all too apparent that changes were occurring in front of our eyes and these changes would affect all of Christendom.

Over and over again we learned the same lesson. When people experience us, especially in worship, and are open to God, they change. Many of these people had conversion experiences. We often say of our first experience at MCC that we felt we had come home. Their experience is not all that different. What a statement about who we are as a church.

When people experience us, especially in worship, and are open to God, they change.

Dialogue always was crucial even when it seemed antagonistic or unfair. One member of the Governing Board challenged a sister by saying, "You're always talking about having straight people in your church, but you haven't produced any." Our sister looked this man "straight" in the face and said, "You're talking to one now!" Another sister was angry because people assumed she was a Lesbian and said she looked like a Lesbian. On the whole it seemed that when hurtful things were said it was out of ignorance and misunderstanding. Isn't it usually? And so we educated.

I was so proud of us as we spoke and shared our stories. Our representatives were given a chance to speak after their reports were given. Rev. Jim Sandmire, Golden Gate MCC, told his story. He explained a typical day in his life. He said that he and his lover got up in the morning, ate breakfast, worked, came home, ate supper, watched TV, exchanged some affection and dropped into bed. "So much for lifestyle," Sandmire concluded. They loved it. They laughed because they were touched. The truth touched them. We are not, after all, so very much different from them.

Next was Pat Evans from San Jose MCC. She passionately talked about not running away anymore and not being afraid anymore. (We're not afraid anymore). Then, Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, co-ecumenical officer of our fellowship, spoke from her heart. As I listened tears rolled down my face. The emotion in the room could not be ignored and neither could the presence of the Spirit. Wilson introduced us. Some 30 MCC people from the San Francisco Bay Area churches, plus our delegation participated in the week's activities and when we stood, all 40 of us, men, women, straight, Lesbian, Gay bisexual and transexual, the entire room stopped breathing. We were there to demonstrate the loving presence of God in our lives and we did just that.

Rev. Don Eastman, MCC Dallas, also presented a report for us. (Please see separate story).

The NCC constituent presentation was also moving. The report about homosexuality and scripture was excellent. One of the best comments was that pork eaters were in bigger trouble than were homosexuals. And the report on lifestyle was dramatic, as was the one on social justice.

The women's caucus meeting, held late at night after a very full day of meetings, reminded me of our struggles as women in MCC and how much we all have in common. What differences there are don't seem significant when we come together. These women were dealing with the same issues we have been or are dealing with. And the woman spirit was the same.

Our experiences for the most part were so positive that it made it even more difficult to read about the event in the newspapers because of the horrendous misreporting. They reported that response was generally negative and that we had been voted down. No vote took place nor was it supposed to. How reporters could be in that room and hear what we heard and see what we saw and feel what we felt and report what they did is a mystery. To miss that was to miss the essence of the experience, to miss the truth.

The obvious high point of the week was the worship service on Wednesday evening where Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry

preached and Rev. Elder Freda Smith and Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson celebrated communion. Perry had them laughing and crying and listening and dealing. Smith and Wilson, two women consecrating, demonstrated our commitment to inclusivity, something the NCC is also struggling with.

was united, not divided as some feared. It was obvious, we were already part of the National Council. Our ministry that night was powerful and empowering.

Afterwards and in private conversations, Governing Board Members shared how at home they had felt, how free, how included, how rich, how blessed. We were

The body of Christ was united, not divided as some feared.

We overwhelmed them, moved them, changed them, ministered to them, loved them, touched them and worshipped with them. Five hundred Lesbians and Gay men and Governing Board Members (about 150 to 200) worshipping together, taking communion together, making history together. In its 32 year history the NCC has never taken communion together and it happened at an MCC service. The NCC broke bread with us. The body of Christ ourselves and that is all it took.

My time there was also rich. I shared a meal with a wonderful lay woman, hugged a bishop while on the elevator, told my story, got loved on and loved.

Whether or not we are accepted into the NCC does not really matter because one thing is for sure. The NCC will never, never, never be the same and for that we thank God.

The NCC will never, never, never be the same and for that we thank God.

NCC Dialogues with Fellowship

The largest ecumenical body in the United States spent a great amount of time learning about Gay and Lesbian Christians and dialoguing with us at its Governing Board meeting in San Francisco May 10-13. Our application for membership in the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. has resulted in an intensive study and dialogue between the 32 member Churches of the NCC and UFMCC.

We have been actively involved in this discussion. At the May Governing Board meeting over 40 MCC members and friends, both clergy and laity, spent time meeting and talking to individuals, small groups, denominational caucuses and before the entire Governing Board. No vote was scheduled or expected at this meeting. Though the media has often chosen to interpret statements of honest differences between Lesbian and Gay Christians and some people in the 32 member Churches of the NCC, it's clear to us that there has been a great deal of honest discussion and support within the National Council.

Far from being a defeat, as some reports have indicated, the May Governing Board meeting was one of great joy and success with many Governing Board members learning more about the UFMCC and our witness to the Christian community. For the first time in history the major Protestant and Orthodox Churches are talking with open Lesbians and Gay men about their role in the Christian Church.

The dialogue between the NCCC and UFMCC has been called "moving" and "a blessing" for the NCCC by official reports of the National Council. In addition, the dialogue will continue.

On Wednesday night, May 11, we hosted a worship service at the request of the National Council. Well over half of the Governing Board members attended and most took Communion following a moving

continued on page 30

god makes room

Remarks of Rev. Don Eastman to Governing Board of National Council of Churches - May 10, 1983 in San Francisco, CA.

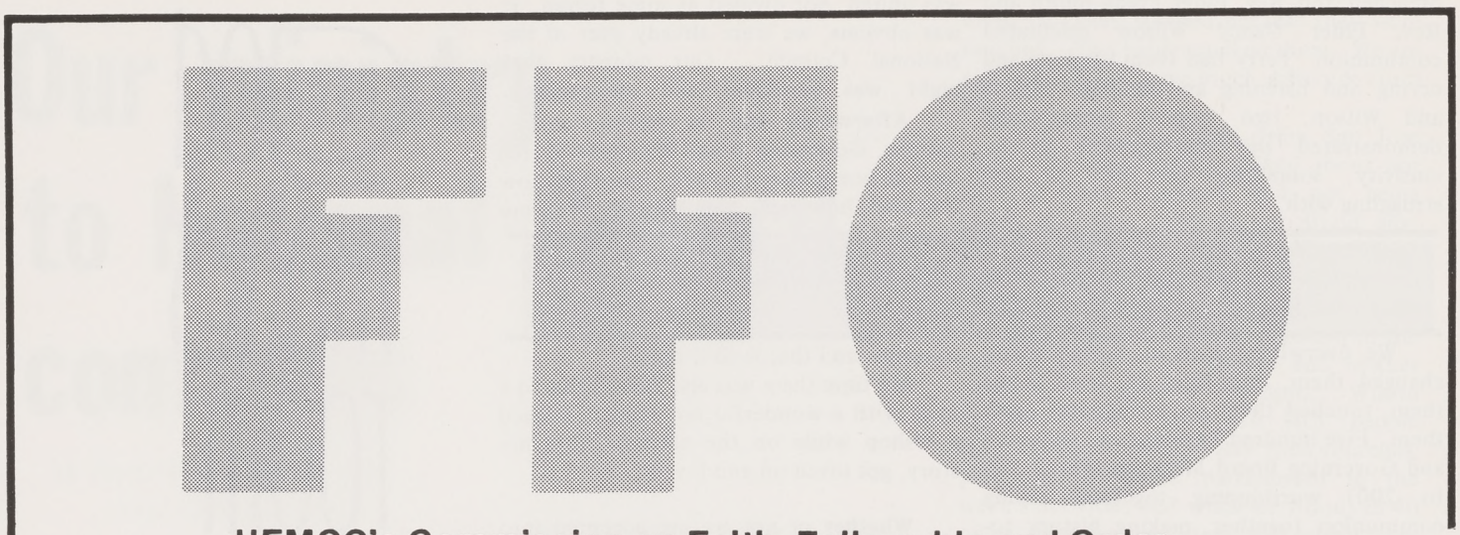
First let me express gratitude for the process of dialogue we have been involved in for the past several months. More than anything else, I believe that dialogue such as this provides the hope for greater understanding of some of the very difficult issues.

I do regret, however, the fact that our dialogue has been limited to so few among you. I urge you to take seriously your Faith and Order Commission's recommendations for continuing dialogue with the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. I ask that you get to know us better at your local level. We sincerely invite you to worship and to dialogue with us in your community.

We in the UFMCC understand and regret that underneath it all the issue is not whether we are a Christian Church that qualifies for membership. The issue really is homosexuality. I want to point out that we did not choose to make homosexuality the issue in this process, but at the same time we are not going to avoid the issue. Quite frankly, I don't think that your church can afford to avoid it any longer either.

Let it be known that the church of Jesus Christ through your action on this issue is sending a very important message to 20 million people, the millions of Gay men and Lesbians in our society. Will it be the Gospel message? Will it be a message of good news? Will it be a message of hope? Or will it be a continuing message

continued on page 31



UFMCC's Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order

THE RISEN CHRIST AND SEXUAL LIBERATION

by Marianne Van Fossen
FFO Clergy Representative
Mid Atlantic District
and
by David M. Conrad,
Zulma Milagros Mercedes Sierra Jessen,
Virginia G. Miles,
Betty A. Perkins

The Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order is engaged in a grass-roots effort to develop a theology of sexuality and spirituality. As part of and in accord with that process, this article was based on a discussion by the Bible Rap Group of MCC of Northern Virginia, with the participants as listed above. As compiler I have tried to reflect wherever possible the various perspectives of the group.

What *is* sexual liberation? To some, it is free-wheeling, irresponsible sexual activity. To others it is freedom from anything artificially or societly imposed which damages the individual or limits creativity or self-expression. It is not an immoral freedom, but rather extremely moral in that it demands the individuals be true to what's good about sex for themselves and for their partner.

Any humanist can find moral sexual liberation by honoring their humanity and their partner's. How, then, does belief in a Risen Christ make a difference? How does being a Christian change how one experiences sexual liberation?

Those of us who were away from Christ for years and found Christ through MCC have been on a similar journey. Before we found the church and through the church came to Christ, our lives were broken. Many of us experienced rejection from churches who were telling us that our love was not "good enough." We were told we were sinners, condemned either to a life of bone-crushing self-denial or forever locked out of paradise. This fragmentation, this splitting of our spiritual/sexual selves created splits throughout our lives: relationships, jobs, family, our self-image. We were lonely, and felt that God had to reject us since the church family gave us no love. Instead, many of us felt a cold chill where there should have been warmth.

When we first came to MCC we were touched by the warmth of love from others who had been through what we had been through. We felt welcomed, really welcomed. We felt as though these folks really did care about us. We felt, although we didn't understand it at first, the power of their faith, the warmth of their love of each other and of God. The witness of love and support, this warmth from the church family brought us closer to God, eventually to the point where we were able to accept ourselves and to accept Christ.

We learned that God did love us, that Christ died and rose again for us, and that Christ called us to wholeness. In our new relationship with God through Christ we learned that we had to turn our whole lives over to Christ – that there was not a part of our lives which was not good enough for God to see. We who had been fragmented now sought wholeness – an integration of our spiritual, sexual and emotional selves. And we found that as we became less fragmented, our sexuality became less fragmented as well.

As Christians, sexual liberation had a new meaning. Christ calls us to be free from damaging restrictions yet to be Christ-like in all our relations. We learned to be honest, (and are still learning), to be compassionate, responsible, committed, warm, generous in our sexual relationships, whether we be single or partnered. We learned and are still learning that we must forever keep before us the Law of Love; that Christ comes first in all our relations, and we must be right with Christ in those relations.

In the times of our lives when we were most fragmented, the Cross became for us not a symbol of hope but one of brokenness and despair. It was used not as an emblem of Christ's atonement and our salvation, but an emblem of guilt and pain. We were told to "bear our Cross" in mute acceptance and unrelieved suffering.

Yet when all of ourselves came to Christ, we learned that our sexuality was not a cross to bear, but rather a gift from God. We learned that Christ was not left on the Cross forever, but transcended death in Resurrection. We who are called to follow Christ are called like Christ to rise, in this life and the next. We are called to transcend the pain of our past, and use it instead as a source of power to end the injustice done to our people. Christ in Resurrection becomes our focus – a Risen, victorious, saving Christ. The Resurrection includes and embraces the Cross and its atoning power, but goes beyond mere suffering to wholeness and victory.

In the Resurrection, we find the truth of our wholeness: transcended pain, victory over death in Christ Jesus in the

now and the not-yet. With Christ, a Risen, glorious Christ, we find a certain freedom to embrace the uncertainty of daily life, the joy of right relation with each other and God, and hope in the life yet to come.

EVANGELISM IN OUR COMMUNITY

by Jo Crisco
FFO Representative
South Central District

For our consideration, let us agree that evangelism is effectively communicating Christ to another person. The primary focus of evengelism is to being spiritual salvation to spiritually unredeemed people and to subsequently involve them in our churches as active disciples of Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we have a responsibility in liberating persons from oppression and exploitation. However, this is secondary to our primary responsibility to share Christ in a spiritual sense with others. God, I feel, wants people to know Jesus, to become disciples, to know the power of Christ in their own life and to begin living as new creatures.

It is true that we should not limit our witnessing to just Lesbian and Gay men or oppressed persons. There are, however, scores of churches and missionary organizations who are preaching and teaching Christ to the heterosexual community. I firmly believe that unless we evangelize our community, it will not be evangelized!!!

It is imperative that all of us in MCC accept our responsibility for reaching Lesbians and Gay men and other oppressed people with the AGAPE love of Christ.

The phenominal growth of MCC worldwide is indicative of the spiritual longing deep within our people. Those of us involved in that growth are experiencing God's tremendous blessings. It is easy for us to become complacent since our spiritual longings have been met. Safe within the walls of our churches, we sometimes lose sight of the pain and longing still present in the majority of our community.

To simply open places of worship and wait for non-believers to come around on their own is a dereliction of our responsibility as Christians. Christ has instructed us to "Go ye and preach the Gospel!" Our marching order is to "Go, preach and teach" not "Sit in isolation and wait!" Christians exist in this world to be like Jesus -- who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

What does all this have to do with our sexuality? It is obvious to even the casual observer, that the methods of evangelism utilized by "straight" churches, schools of evangelism, or by church growth proponents are not necessarily workable for us in reaching to our people of a different life style.

For example, door to door evangelism or passing out tracts on a street corner would be practical and effective only in the larger metropolitan areas with a concentrated Lesbian and Gay section. Further, radio and TV evangelism is presently not financially feasible for most MCC congregations.

On-the-job witnessing can be tedious unless we are able to be honest with our employer and co-workers regarding our sexuality and church membership.

While some of our churches have experienced a measure of success with a "bar ministry," it, too, presents drawbacks. It has been my experience that the mood of people in the bars is not condusive to in depth witnessing.

What then should be the method of our evangelizing?

MCC has often been described as a return to early century Christianity. Early Christianity flourished by person to person contact. Therefore, I believe our greatest resource, presently, for evangelizing our community is in teaching people how to do one on one effective witnessing.

The first area of training is to have already experienced faith in Christ. By faith, I mean more than a temporal intellectual ascent to Christ. I'm referring to a personal relationship with Jesus, a supernatural experience of a divine nature.

Secondly, we must thoroughly train our members regarding Christianity and homosexuality. This question of sexuality being given by God or accepted by God must be clearly understood. They must have not only have settled that question for themselves but also must be able to "give an answer for the hope that lies within them." It is not necessary to memorize a scholarly presentation. However, to be effective, they should be comfortable and articulate in giving a brief summary of their understanding of the issue.

Thirdly, we need to teach how to use the Word of God to bring others to a knowledge of their acceptance by God and their need for the saviour. They should be able to understand and explain the way of spiritual wholeness or salvation as described in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among people whereby we must be saved."

One's sharing of their own experience with Christ is an excellent method of incorporating all of these points. The account of a first hand experience flows naturally and is, therefore, powerful and convincing.

Then there is the dynamic impact of our own lives . . . when unchurched people see something radically different about someone's life; when they can sense a peace within; when they are touched by a radiating joy, they are moved to ask "Why and what?" Then an opportunity is opened for us to relate just what Jesus has done in and for us.

We can begin sharing with our close friends the joy Christ has given us. Social acquaintances offer another avenue. Finally, I feel that few of our churches really maximize the use of Visitor's cards. We need to develop detailed programs for following up on those people who do "Come by." The programs should be more than a follow up letter or phone call (which should be done without saying). We need detailed programs of follow up visits, methods of determining if there is a social or financial need that the church can help alleviate, and a genuine commitment especially by the leadership of the church to draw each one into the life of the church.

We have used the shield of our sexuality for all these years, claiming God's indulgence for our lack of really evangelizing our own. This isn't an issue of "Should we?" rather it is one of "How can we answer the command of Christ to do so?"

Send *your* church news to *JOURNEY* the first week of the month to appear in the next issue. Send photos, too.

JOHN McNEILL TO SPEAK AT CIVIL RIGHTS CONFERENCE

A civil rights conference, entitled "Gay Men and Lesbians in the 1980's," will be held in Lincoln, Nebraska, on July 15-16. Featured speakers include Father John McNeill, author of *The Church and the Homosexual*; State Senator Allan Spear of Minnesota; and Carol Lease, Executive Director of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Colorado. For more information, write Coalition, Box 94882, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509.

Exercise In Christian Community Living

EXCEL LOS ANGELES

by Dottie Ritcey
Director, Excel Los Angeles

The Excel Movement is a Christian renewal weekend which is staffed by lay and clergy within the Fellowship. Keith Apple, Excel Co-ordinator, shared a few months ago in *JOURNEY* about his experience and about the movement itself. Keith and I shared the same Excel weekend and the same group in February of 1977. So much has happened since that time with both of us in our walk with God. We have used the basic message and method of Christianity taught through the Excel Movement during those years. We have grown, struggled and rejoiced in our walk with God and with our sisters and brothers in Christ.

At the time of being asked to do an article I wondered just what I had to offer that was informative or inspiring. At one point I thought of sharing the struggles that the people and the movement have experienced and how God has worked with us, changing us and the Movement. Then it seemed as though it might be good to give some personal history about how each team was able to get started through prayers and the power of God.

I believe I struggled because what I want to share is a very personal and powerful dialogue between God and me during Excel 20 in Los Angeles. It is something so awesome and powerful because I experienced God's presence and experienced it in a way that must be recorded and shared with this Fellowship. Often I have wished to go to those great Christian revivals and constantly God would say to me that I didn't have to go to them. God was here with this part of the Body of Christ if we would open the doors for God. The Excel Team of Los Angeles and Santa Barbara did welcome the Holy Spirit but I'm sure I speak for all of us in saying we had no idea that God would move as God did.

Saturday night is the time for the skits that those attending put on in conjunction with the things learned and/or reviewed during that day. At the end of one of these skits, the SHEKINAH Glory of God came upon us. This word Shekinah I have recently learned to be a Hebrew verb meaning *to abide, to settle down* or *dwelling of God*. I had never experienced this much of God's presence and was certainly talking a lot to God at the time to see what all of this meant. I invite you to share this experience and dialogue with me now, a dialogue with the God of mercy and love, who shared with me for nearly three hours.

"God, I know you said you had a special work this weekend but how about if I gather everyone and we go into the Chapel for worship?"

"You are in worship."

"What would you have me do? These people are wailing and I don't understand or use that word wailing. What does it all mean?"

"Listen and I will show you what to do and what to say. I will never leave you. Explain to everyone that I am here to heal the sorrows of their lives, to heal them spiritually and for some to come to know me, and for others to know that I'm with you all as a people."

"O.K. Now what . . . Please lead me, God, and teach me."

"You and Keith are now to pray with those asking for prayer."

Keith and I prayed for four or five and when we turned around we were overwhelmed with so many waiting.

"Jesus, there's so many . . . so much pain. Show us those who can help us with prayer." Suddenly faces came out of the group of 80 people and we prayed two by two as God had instructed. Some who we prayed with were so taken up by God that they "rested in the Spirit" or as some may say, were "slain in the Spirit."

We continued to pray and then God showed me that some people were looking to me rather than to God . . ."What do I do, God?"

"Pray for a short time with them, then turn their spirit over to me and go to the next person."

"God, that seems almost uncaring, are you sure about this? . . . O.K."

Then it seemed that as we walked away God would take them up in the Spirit and give them whatever each individual needed.

"Jesus, this is an awful lot that you're doing! Please take care of those that may not understand . . . Please give the understanding that they need. God, if anything is not of you, I am trusting you to stop it."

Then some started coming asking for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which for many was so different from their upbringing and yet the Holy Spirit had come upon them so gently and comforting that it was as though they knew all was in the hands of God.

"You know, God, it's hard to always be obedient to you . . . why do you have to do it like this? Wouldn't it be nicer in the worship service or at least more appropriate." Then the Scripture came to my mind, how God's ways are not our ways. Once again there was the submitting myself to God and walking in obedience to God.

After many hours I knew that the power of healing had left me and I seemed to come back to what was, perhaps, a natural state. I thanked God for giving me and others the strength to be obedient to serve and for those who received what God

continued on page 19

EXCEL

Excel in the Redwoods
(San Francisco Bay Area)
113 Columbia
Mill Valley, CA 94941

Excel of the Lakes
410 Baldwin Drive
Rochester, MI 48063

Excel in the Spirit:
Northwest Gathering
(Portland, OR)
4051 E. Burnside
Portland, OR 97214

Excel Los Angeles
P.O. Box 90954
Long Beach, CA 90809-0954

Excel in the Desert
(Phoenix)
P.O. Box 121
Scottsdale, AZ 85252

Excel by the Sea
(Santa Barbara)
P.O. Box 222
Santa Barbara, CA 93102

Substance Abuse Task Force

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE

by G. Daune Littlefield
Lay Minister

The whole substance abuse problem, the old as well as the new, has been handled in a typical or traditional fashion; cover it up! Substance abuse has been defined as "the" problem. Substance abuse, like most of the so called problems facing us today, is not the problem at all, it is a symptom of a problem. The trouble lies not with the abuse but with an individual's inability to deal with problems on any concrete or constructive basis. It is an inability to face life and reality, not just the use of a substance. To merely remove the substance from the user is not enough. We, as Christians, have to show the individual something better, some other *Way* of handling their problems and facing life.

Substance abuse counseling cannot begin until the individual realizes there is a problem. Scare techniques don't work. Once a person comes to you and requests help, then the work begins. Here are some guidelines for intervention: (1) It is important to provide for immediate, non-judgmental, non-punitive care and concern. You must fully realize that it is not a criminal problem nor even a moral one; it is a medical, sociological, psychological problem. (2) Forget about the past and deal with the individual directly at the point of immediate need which you can feel and hear. (3) Draw out alternative choices to help formulate a program for change in the immediate future. (4) Gradually work toward long-term planning for change of life style, a process of taking charge of one's life. (5) Action should be emphasized. A a person survives failure and begins to experience personal success, attitudes and patterns can begin to change as well. Don't get confused when the user gives "reasons" for the problems; they are only systematic defense mechanisms for the individual.

The abuse had to be met at the emotional level, or it's not going to be met at all. Try to keep the individual from setting unrealistic goals. A "here and now" orientation is very important. As the problems underlying the substance abuse start to get resolved, the needs and dependencies on drugs will diminish. The abuser needs guidance and support as s/he often stumbles over the obstacles of change in life style. These individuals must become involved in preventative maintenance. By going over this list of symptoms regularly, either by ourselves, or with someone else, we can detect early warning signs of relapse. Clearly the time to prevent a relapse is long before the irrational thinking has reached the final insanity of taking the first fix, pill or drink. Here is a check list of symptoms leading to relapse:

1) EXHAUSTION - Allowing ourself to become overly tired or in poor health. Some substance abusers are prone to work addictions - perhaps in a hurry to "make up for lost time." Good health and enough rest are important. If we feel well we are apt to think well. Feel poorly and our thinking is apt to deteriorate. Feel bad enough and we might begin thinking abusing substances couldn't make it any worse.

2) DISHONESTY - When we begin to deny the reality of what we are and how we came to realize it we are getting into trouble. This can begin with a pattern of unnecessary little lies and deceits with family, friends or fellow workers. Next we begin to lie to ourselves - rationalize - making excuses for not doing what we do not want to do, or for doing what we know we should not do.

3) IMPATIENCE - Frustration because things aren't moving fast enough for us. The recovery process itself is training in dealing with these feelings. Our self-will run riot must be curbed - we live a day at a time.

4) ARGUMENTATIVENESS - Arguing small and ridiculous points of view indicates a need to always be right - "Why don't you be reasonable and agree with me?" Looking for an excuse to abuse the substance(s).

5) DEPRESSION - Unreasonable and unaccountable despair may occur in cycles and can be dealt with by talking to others about them.

6) SELF PITY - Is a luxury the recovering abuser cannot afford. It is denial of reality and should be treated by remembering where we came from.

7) COMPLACENCY - There is nothing wrong with a healthy fear of chemical substances. When we dull our keen awareness that it is a poison for us - the abuser - a feeling of false security sets in - our defenses are down. More relapses occur when things are going well than otherwise. Letting down on disciplines of recovery leads to relapse.

The upcoming *General Conference* in Toronto will have a 24-hour room for those individuals who don't wish to socialize through alcohol or drug usage. Also, there will be some AA meetings for those registered for the conference. I would like to have several daily. In order to accomplish this I need volunteers to chair these meetings. If you feel lead to be a meeting leader, please contact me as soon as possible. On Saturday, July 16, 1983, there will be an information booth at the Fair and those members of the Task Force will be there to answer questions and provide resource materials for anyone interested. Please write and become involved in this outreach to our brothers and sisters. If you can help during conference, contact me:

Daune Littlefield
1910 Canyon Creek
Temple, TX 76502
(817) 778-0401
(817) 778-4841

8) EXPECTING TOO MUCH FROM OTHERS - "I've changed; why hasn't everybody else?" It's a plus if they do - but it is still our problem if they do not. They may not trust you yet, may still be looking for further proof. You cannot expect others to change their life style just because you have. Who is the only person you can really change?

continued on page 22

Exploring Christian Anti-Semitism

by Steve Carson
Clergyperson, MCC New York

I heard a pastor preach a sermon one Palm Sunday telling how Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem as King. He continued by saying that when Jerusalem was later destroyed by Rome in the year 70, that that demonstrated God's judgment against the Jews because they failed to recognize the "real" King. In the spirit of self-examination, I invite you to explore with me what I would call the sin of "Christian anti-Semitism."

First, we need a definition. I would define Christian anti-Semitism as "a system of thinking and acting imbedded in the Christian tradition that separates ourselves from Judaism, that devalues Jewish thought *and therefore* Jewish people, making us as Christians *better than* Jews, and Jews, therefore, as a category, a little less human."

I need to give examples of what I mean, in order to make the case that there is indeed a problem here. The issue, I believe, centers on whether we as Christians see ourselves as part of the Jewish tradition, *or* whether we see ourselves as separate, believing that somehow a break has happened. For example:

- *ARE THERE TWO DIFFERENT COVENANTS, ONE BETTER THAN THE OTHER?*
  According to this line of thought, the Jews have "the law" while Christians have "grace." And "the law" is associated with "restrictions, ceremony, outward appearances," while "grace" is associated with "freedom, truth, the inner spirit."
- *ARE THERE TWO DIFFERENT BIBLES, ONE BETTER THAN THE OTHER?*
  Have you ever received, or given a New Testament, or been told to "just read John?" Have you ever been in a worship service where people stood for the gospel, but remained seated for the reading from the Old Testament?
- *ARE THERE, IN FACT, TWO GODS, ONE BETTER THAN THE OTHER?*
  Here, the "Old Testament God" is a God of wrath and judgment, while the "new improved New Testament God" is a God of love.

I have heard all these said here at MCC.

There is, of course, a more extreme form of Christian anti-Semitism. This is the belief that "The Jews killed Christ," and are, therefore, forsaken, that covenant revoked. Mercifully, I have never heard anyone at MCC say that. But I know that for many of us, that attitude was a familiar part of our religious growing up.

On the part of most Christians, these ideas are not intentional or malicious, or even conscious. Rather, they are very subtle foundations of how we perceive and define ourselves. And they are ideas that bear closer examination, in this, a time of swastikas on synagogues.

Christian anti-Semitism has deep roots in the Christian tradition. In the Middle Ages there developed the custom of "usury," by which Jews became associated with the handling of money. This was because they were banned from most other trades. Our modern word "ghetto" has its origins in the enforced isolation of Jews into certain areas of towns and cities. Expulsion was a common threat, as Christian rulers periodically decided to expel Jews from a city, or a region, or a nation. And, as Christians in the twentieth century, we can never forget that the most organized and concentrated manifestation of these attitudes occurred only a generation ago in Eastern Europe, in an attempt to make the world "free of Jews."

All this goes back to the days of the earliest church. Within the very first generations of the church, there was an attempt, led by a man named Marcion, to say that the Hebrew scriptures were no longer valid for Christians, that they, in fact, described a different God. Marcion claimed that Christians need only read the New Testament (and only select portions of that!) and that Christians had a *new* God, a God of love that was vastly superior to that "nasty old" Hebrew God. Well, the church held one of its first councils to decide the matter, and ruled that Marcion was wrong, that there are *not* two Bibles, or two Gods, that there was *one* Bible and *one* God, testified to by both Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

Jesus was a Jew. He never thought of himself as anything different. He was a faithful student of the Torah and the prophets. He spoke in the language of Judaism. His command to love God and neighbor was derived from the Hebrew scriptures. The words in the song, "Seek Ye First," are all words spoken by Jesus *as he was quoting* from the Hebrew scriptures, from the book of Deuteronomy.

Likewise, Paul, the single most important clarifier of our faith, was a Jew. In Romans 11, he carefully traces his ancestry as a Jew, "I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin." In this letter to the Church at Rome, Paul deals with this issue of the relationship of Judaism and Jewish people to Christianity and the Church. That issue had become a controversy there. It seems that the Church at Rome had originated within the Jewish community, but that a few years before, the Emperor Claudius had expelled all Jews from the city. Than a new Emperor came along who annulled that decree, and the Jewish-Christians drifted back. In the meantime, the church had become predominantly Gentile, and apparently their welcome of their returning community was less than enthusiastic. To this church Paul wrote:

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continued on page 22

Exploring Christian Anti-Semitis

by Steve Carson
Clergyperson, MCC New York

I heard a pastor preach a sermon one Palm Sunday telling how Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem as King. He continued by saying that when Jerusalem was later destroyed by Rome in the year 70, that that demonstrated God's judgment against the Jews because they failed to recognize the "real" King. In the spirit of self-examination, I invite you to explore with me what I would call the sin of "Christian anti-Semitism."

First, we need a definition. I would define Christian anti-Semitism as "a system of thinking and acting imbedded in the Christian tradition that separates ourselves from Judaism, that devalues Jewish thought *and therefore* Jewish people, making us as Christians *better than* Jews, and Jews, therefore, as a category, a little less human."

I need to give examples of what I mean, in order to make the case that there is indeed a problem here. The issue, I believe, centers on whether we as Christians see ourselves as part of the Jewish tradition, *or* whether we see ourselves as separate, believing that somehow a break has happened. For example:

- *ARE THERE TWO DIFFERENT COVENANTS, ONE BETTER THAN THE OTHER?*
  According to this line of thought, the Jews have "the law" while Christians have "grace." And "the law" is associated with "restrictions, ceremony, outward appearances," while "grace" is associated with "freedom, truth, the inner spirit."
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On the part of most Christians, these ideas are not intentional or malicious, or even conscious. Rather, they are very subtle foundations of how we perceive and define ourselves. And they are ideas that bear closer examination, in this, a time of swastikas on synagogues.

Christian anti-Semitism has deep roots in the Christian tradition. In the Middle Ages there developed the custom of "usury," by which Jews became associated with the handling of money. This was because they were banned from most other trades. Our modern word "ghetto" has its origins in the enforced isolation of Jews into certain areas of towns and cities. Expulsion was a common threat, as Christian rulers periodically decided to expel Jews from a city, or a region, or a nation. And, as Christians in the twentieth century, we can never forget that the most organ-

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olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. You will say, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.' That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will God spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in God's kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off. And even the others, if they do not persist in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree. Romans 11: 1, 13, 17-24

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There are not two Gods. I find this to be one of the more pervasive, if disguised, attitudes of Christians toward the Old Testament. I also find it one of the most ill-informed. One does not have to look hard at the Hebrew scriptures to encounter a God of compassion and love.

Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should fail to have compassion on it? Yea, these may forget, yet I will never forget you. Behold, I have engraved my people on the palms of my hand. Your walls are always before me. Isaiah 49: 15-16

It is important for us as people of faith to think this through. There is at this moment a massive effort by some parts of conservative Christianity to "evangelize the Jews." There is an expression that refers to a Jew who becomes a Christian as a "completed Jew." One does not have to think hard to realize what that says about Jews who are *not* Christian. I listen to a Christian radio station that carries a show which one day told its audience that today is an opportunity "to convert the Jew that God has placed in your path."

It is by no means fair to pick on only Conservatives. It is fashionable now in liberal circles to talk about how "open" and how "radical" Jesus was, how different he was from Judaism, especially in areas like his attitudes toward women. I maintain that this is a cheap shot at Judaism, based on a simplistic caricature of Judaism. There is a tradition within Judaism of very open and humanistic attitudes toward divorce, birth control and abortion. And, in all honesty, who is the Christian Church to begin casting stones when it comes to attitudes toward women?

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continued on page 22

Government Structures & Systems

BY DON EASTMAN
CHAIR, GSS

A SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

Rapid growth of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches has created a need for the re-examination of the basic structures and systems that serve our congregational form of church government. Prior to 1979, attention was given to the study of governmental forms and structures in various other denominations. Then, at General Conference IX in Los Angeles, the Commission on Government Structures and Systems was re-organized and given a specific mandate to bring back a comprehensive review and proposals for revision of Article IV, dealing with ministry. It was in this revision that we affirmed the importance of ministry by *all* believers, not just a select group called "clergy."

In the current biennium GSS has turned its attention to the structures of government that serve us at the Fellowship, District and Local levels. In this process the Commission has met twice (with an additional meeting scheduled immediately prior to General Conference XI) and has received widespread input from District Conferences, church bodies and individuals. The resulting proposals reflect extensive revision in each level of our church government.

The development of these proposals is in one respect somewhat similar to the development of the New Testament Canon. They reflect what has evolved and is coming to be accepted. They reflect accomodation of the changing structure rather than a design to change the structure.

For instance, several Districts already have provided for full-time leadership. The Board of Elders already sees the need for representation and communication within Districts, thus appoints a liaison Elder. Again, the Board of Elders already has seen the need to appoint a manager for the Fellowship offices.

In addition to this accommodation of change however, these proposals reflect expression of what the Commission perceives to be a strong desire throughout our Fellowship for more active leadership and programming iniative closer to local levels. This, along with the desire for more geographic representation on the Board of Elders, became the basis for the proposed revision to Article V.

KEY FEATURES OF PROPOSED REVISIONS

Article V

Board of Elders

The Board of Elders would consist of 11 members, five of whom would be designated Elders-at-Large, and would be elected by the General Conference to specific offices: Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer and World Church Extension Elder. The remaining six members would be designated Regional Elders and would be elected by their respective Regional Conferences.

The five Elders-at-Large would function as the Executive Committee of the Board of Elders, would appoint an Executive Director to manage the Fellowship offices and programs and would be accountable to the full Board of Elders.

Regions

The boundaries of the 11 existing Districts in North America would be redrawn to create six multi-national Regions, each with sufficient numerical and economic strength to provide for a full-time Regional Elder. The concept of Regional Elders allows for full-time leadership to provide spiritual guidance, to foster growth of new groups and to administer a regional program that will strengthen churches. This proposal sees both episcopal and administrative functions essential to this position.

Regional Conferences, similar to present District Conferences, would meet at least once each year. Regional Conferences would elect a Regional Committee which would carry out many of the functions of the present Board of Home Missions, as well as others defined in the new By-Laws and by the Regional Conference.

Area Structures

Within each Region smaller Areas would be defined and a structure established to provide for fellowship and spiritual growth. Each Area would have an Area Coordinator and a Lay Representative. In many cases Areas would be smaller than present Districts, enabling more frequent fellowship and less of the sense of isolation we often experience with the present structure.

World Church Extension

A Board of World Church Extension would be appointed by the Board of Elders and chaired by the World Church Extension Elder. This Board would have jurisdiction over creation of World Church Extension Regions, World Church extension programs and policies, and funds raised for or by World Church Extension. This Board would be accountable to the Board of Elders and the General Conference.

World Church Extension Regions may be created by the Board of World Church Extension. Each of these Regions would be under the direct supervision of the World Church Extension Elder. Any of these Regions may grow to the full autonomy and status of the other six Regions when sufficient strength exists.

continued on page 19

Article VI

The Commission gave consideration to the problems created by present designations of church bodies: Study Group, Mission, Chartered Church. Whether a church body is a Study Group or a Chartered Church it is still a church and should be designated as such. Moreover, we were aware that a disparity in representation exists between Study Groups and the other church bodies. The proposed revisions of Article VI seek to address these issues.

Creating New Churches

Responsibility for the standards and procedures to create new works is delegated to the Regional Committee or Board of World Church Extension. This is seen as enabling, given the wide differences that may exist in such vastly differing locales.

Provisionally Chartered Churches

A new work with at least 12 persons who are committed to support an MCC Church may become a Provisionally Chartered Church upon petition to and action of the Regional Committee. While the criteria for the establishment of churches are more specific than that of our present Study Groups and Missions, the detailed provisions of the charter are left to the local options of the Region. It is likely that most existing Study Groups and Missions will meet these criteria.

Non-provisionally Chartered Churches

Similar to the present criteria for Chartered Churches, this proposal adds the requirement that a church make a reasonable effort to send its Pastor and Lay Delegate(s) to Regional and General Conferences. Provision is also made for the Regional Conference to require a review of all such charters at least once every five years.

Article X

A major change is recommended in total percentage of tithe paid by local congregations and in the amount of the percentage received by both the Fellowship and proposed Regions.

Presently local congregations pay a total of 12 percent of their income: 10 percent to the UFMCC and 2 percent to their districts. The new By-Laws would require that churches pay a total of 15 percent: 7 percent to the UFMCC and 8 percent to their Regions.

Obviously, the aforementioned proposal for change raises a number of transition and implementation issues. Many of these issues have been identified, are being discussed and will be the focus of the July meeting of GSS immediately prior to General Conference.

There are numerous other minor proposed changes, many of which would bring the By-Laws into conformity with the preceding proposals. For a complete copy of the proposals of the Commission on Government Structures and Systems contact your District Coordinator or Lay Representative.

Locating a pastor

A MANUAL FOR CONGREGATIONS WITHOUT A PASTOR

The Rev. J.E. Paul Breton has authored a very helpful guidebook for MCC congregations called *LOCATING A PASTOR: A MANUAL FOR THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE UFMCC TOWARD SELECTING PASTORS AND FILLING EMPTY PULPITS*. The author is presently Pastor of New Covenant MCC, Cypress, California. He has been involved in the professional ministry of the UFMCC since 1971 and has served as pastor, interim pastor, clergy staff member, District Coordinator and member of several committees and commissions. Breton's considerable experience and expertise is clearly displayed in this invaluable guide for churches which are without a pastor. The material is readily applicable both to congregations that are relatively new and those that are well established.

The manual *LOCATING A PASTOR* helps a congregation to explore and act on the following questions:

- What is a pastor?
- How do we staff the church in the meantime? What are the roles and responsibilities of church personnel? What are the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors?
- How do we "togetherize" the congregation? How do we do a congregational self-evaluation?
- What do we want in a pastor?
- What are we willing to provide to support a pastor?
- What should the pulpit committee (or pastoral search committee) do in sending out letters, processing applications and resumes, and sending out responses?
- How do we elect a pastor?
- What do we do if no applications come in?
- What do we do if the committee cannot recommend a candidate?
- What do we do to get our new pastor to his/her new church home?

For price and information write Rev. J.E. Paul Breton. Recommended by the Rev. Jeffrey Pulling, Ph.D., Director of Samaritan Extended Studies, Hartford, Connecticut.

continued from page 14

had for them. Then God told me to sit and rest -- in fact told me to have a cup of coffee. God is so practical at times.

Later that weekend five people came to know Jesus as their personal Savior in a very quiet and personal way. Many testified how real God had become to them. During the rest of the weekend there were many questions that needed to be answered or discussed. Some we couldn't answer, so we referred them back to their local pastors and also gave them our phone numbers. We suggested several books and explained that many answers come from reading the Scriptures and asking God to give understanding to the Scriptures.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, what does this experience mean for us? If we allow ourselves to broaden our perspectives it means that the Holy Spirit is moving through this Fellowship in a powerful and awesome, yet, personal way.

stay connected

Department of Christian Social Action

YEARS OF DECISION: LESBIANS AND GAY MEN IN THE 80's

by R. Adam DeBaugh
Collective Writer

(This is adapted from a speech given on November 19, 1982, at Keys of the Kingdom MCC in Key West as part of the Florida Task Force Board Meeting weekend.)

The 1980's are developing into incredibly important years of decision for the Lesbian and Gay community. Politically, we still face major threats that must be countered, at the same time we are having unprecedented political success. Socially, we face our own ennui with a life-style that has developed into meaningless hedonism for many, with all its attendant problems. Religiously, we face exciting advances in not only our relationships as a community with mainline churches, but also an increase in our own spiritual fulfillment and the resulting growth of Lesbian and Gay religious groups.

The 1980's are a time of our maturing. In this decade we enter our maturity as a movement and as a community.

Political

An era of unprecedented threats against Gay and Lesbian people continues. Conservatism is *not* dead. The National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), the Moral Majority, and others are more and more sophisitcated and dangerous. Anti-Gay politics is at an all-time high. Yet we still have unprecedented successes as well! In this Congress we now have the highest number of co-sponsors of the Lesbian and Gay civil rights legislation in history. In the 1982 elections, every one of the 67 co-sponsors in the House and Senate who sought re-election, won -- which has never happened before. It looks as though another 15 to 20 co-sponsors will be added to the bill in the House of Representatives.

Several anti-Gay Congresspeople were defeated in 1982, including Rep. Albert Lee Smith, chief sponsor of the Family Protection Act. The Human Rights Campaign Fund, the pro-Gay political action committee closely allied with the Gay Rights National Lobby, raised over $600,000, becoming the 17th largest of the 718 political action committees in the United States, and winning 81% of the races in which it was involved. The Campaign Fund helped some endangered Congresspeople to win re-election, like Representatives Bob Edgar (PA), Les AuCoin (OR), Jim Howard (NJ), Tom Foglietta (PA), Bill Clay (MO, and Barney Frank (MA).

These unprecedented political successes were all accomplished with the assistance of local political groups, which raised money, provided volunteers and got the vote out for candidates who support Gay and Lesbian rights. But that isn't enough. The 1980's will be a time of greater political organizing – it must be, especially on state and local levels if we are to continue the successful struggle against anti-Gay and conservative forces.

Threats still abound against the Lesbian and Gay community and they are growing in strength each week. The Ku Klux Klan and other right-wing forces continue their attacks against Gay men and Lesbians. Recent attacks on MCC churches like the burning of the Atlanta church are only part of a nation-wide increase in violence against Gays and Lesbians. In New York City last year, police raids on "Blue's" bar, a largely Black Gay bar, were evocative of police raids and brutality of 15 years ago.

While we have enjoyed tremendous political successes, the political threats to our community are also growing and becoming stronger.

Social Aspects

We face the results of our freedom in the 1970's – freedom that we translated very often into license. Many Lesbians and Gay men went to extremes in their life-styles. Relationships often gave way to expressions of sexual extremism. Now we reap the result: one-third of our people are alcoholics, large numbers are drug abusers, the suicide rate is still high, medically new diseases related to the breakdown of our immune systems ravage and terrify Gay males, hepatitis is the norm, gonorrhea and syphilis seem inescapable, and for the first time in recorded history more Gay men have crabs than cats.

And we are sad. We yearn. I remember a young man I met recently who told me he doesn't want to be Gay anymore. He wanted romance in his life, not just one-night stands. He wanted someone to send him flowers. Another young man who has been extremely sexually active told me that all he wants now is a home life, someone to love him and with whom to build a normal, quiet, even boring home life.

I think – I hope – that we are beginning a change in our approach to relationships. Though large numbers of Lesbians (especially) and Gay men never lost the ability and desire to find love and settle down. Many other Gays and Lesbians, especially those who have been most visible, have been wild, hedonistic, irresponsible, even flighty. Some of us will continue to live this fast life, and others of us will indulge ourselves from time to time. We have experimented and played. We have risked our health, personal safety, and even our lives. We have spent fortunes on leather, dresses, toys and equipment. We have bought thousands of dollars worth of liquids to drink, sniff and smear on ourselves. (For those of you with incredibly filthy minds, I had cologne in mind as something we smear on ourselves.)

And as I travel around and speak to people, I hear more and more, "Is this all there is?" We long for that which all our partying didn't provide – a man or a woman to cuddle up with before the television, someone to cook with and for, someone to share our lives with.

And I firmly believe that the '80's will see more romance in our lives, more relationships of a serious, long-term nature, less personal risking except in things that really matter. There is nothing necessarily wrong with all the things I mentioned, but I think Gay and Lesbian folks are very much like straight folks in that we have strong mating and love needs. We need to be careful not to adopt and twist straight models that may not work for us or are corrupted. We need to look at the failure of straight relationships, too. Why do up to 40 and 50% of current heterosexual marriages end in divorce? We can't simply imitate straight relationship models that no

longer work for straight people, much less being able to be adapted to the unique experience of same-sex couples. But I do think that the 1980's will be a time of *love* – not indiscriminate lust, but real committed love.

Religious Aspects

There are three factors in the religious and spiritual lives of Lesbians and Gay men that are important to the 1980's. The first is the fact that the mainline churches and other religious organizations are dealing with us, like it or not. The San Francisco report in the Roman Catholic church, the courageous stand of United Methodist Bishop Wheatley on Gays and Lesbians in the Church, the incredible media coverage of the UFMCC and its application to the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and the dialogue in progress between the UFMCC and the NCCC member communions.

Secondly, the growth of Lesbian and Gay religious organizations is phenomenal. The UFMCC is growing at a rate of one new congregation a week. Dignity, Integrity, Affirmation and many other religious groups which minister to Lesbians and Gay men are also growing, adding chapters, members and the quality of their outreach to their parent churches. And now the National Congress of Lesbian and Gay Religious Organizations is getting under way – a Lesbian and Gay "Council of Churches."

Lastly, though, and most importantly, there is a new sense of Lesbian and Gay spirituality which is being experienced in the world today. Gay men and Lesbians are experiencing a craving for the spiritual needs of their nature to be met. We are in the midst of a major renaissance of spiritual yearning, growth and power today. More and more people are finding that Jesus fills the void in their lives.

This will result in an exciting theology, a religious renewal, great changes in the lives of our people, and incredible personal strength on the part of Lesbian and Gay folks. Spiritually and religiously, this is a time of great power and growth.

In conclusion, it is my belief that the rest of the 1980's will be a time of challenge and growth for the Lesbian and Gay community. We face great responsibilities and potential strength. There are real threats to our community, not only political and religious threats, but also medical, economic and social threats. But there are also tremendous potentials for economic, political, social, religious and spiritual growth as well. In fact, I believe we are on the verge of major breakthroughs in the way we think of each other, the way we deal with love and relationships, and the way in which we approach our relationship with the Almighty.

In two areas especially, I believe we face a dramatic sense of growth and change – spiritually and in terms of love and relationships. The Lesbian and Gay religious community will be in the forefront of these changing attitudes in our community. In other words, we – the Lesbian and Gay religious community – have a major responsibility to let our people know that our life is more than one-night stands and loneliness and AIDS. We have a major responsibility to bring more and more people to Christ and to the saving grace of faith in God. Thus, the 1980's are a time of great excitement.

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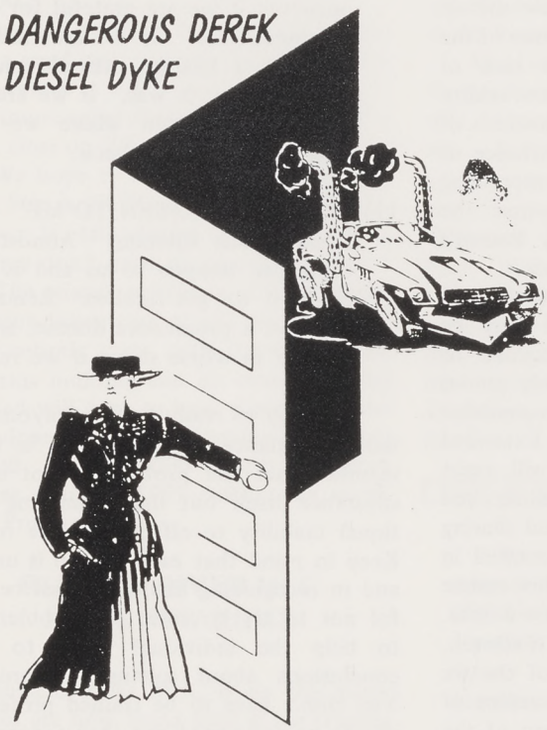

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Samaritan Extended Studies

ADULT EDUCATIONAL COURSES READY

Samaritan Extended Studies is an educational ministry of and for the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. One of the functions of Samaritan Extended Studies is to provide adult educational materials. Presently there are four courses available to local congregations.

STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD is a workshop on stewardship designed by Dr. Jeffrey Pulling, Dean of Samaritan Extended Studies. This two-hour workshop is divided into three parts: Time, Abilities and Financial Income. Participants explore what it means to be a steward and what it means to tithe their time, abilities and financial income to Christ's ministry. Included are Biblical study, group presentations, small group sharing, individual projects and praying. The workshop format with detailed instructions for the leader/facilitator is available for $2.00.

SHARING YOU AND YOUR FAITH is a series of six workshops on interpersonal evangelism, sharing oneself and sharing one's faith. The purpose of these sequential workshops is to encourage and stimulate faith sharing. Activities include Biblical study, psychological/sociological study, group presentations, sharing in small groups and in pairs, disclosure activities, role playing and praying. These workshops, which were compiled by Dr. Jeffrey Pulling, are explained in some detail in the March 1983 issue of *JOURNEY*. The six sessions may be offered separately or as a six-part course. Each session takes a minimum of one hour. The packet *SHARING YOU AND YOUR FAITH* contains the outline and materials for all six workshops, and it is designed for both leader and participants. Individual packets cost $5.00. For orders of ten or more packets, the price is reduced to $4.00 each.

DOING YOUR OWN THEOLOGY is a six-hour seminar on learning the basic tools of doing theology. It was developed by the Rev. Bruce Hill, Pastor of Calvary MCC (Redwood City, CA), and is based on Douglas Wingeier's book *WORKING OUT YOUR OWN BELIEFS: A GUIDE FOR DOING YOUR OWN THEOLOGY* (Abingdon Press, 1980). A detailed description of the book and Hill's seminar may be found in the May 1983 issue of *SOTER*. The January 1983 issue of *JOURNEY* reports the use of this seminar by Calvary MCC. *DOING YOUR OWN THEOLOGY* includes a presentation of Wingeier's basic material adapted for MCC use and helpful sharing exercises for each of the sections. These exercises are practical and personal ways to use the knowledge and skills learned in the seminar. The Leader's Manual costs $4.00. The leader will also need a copy of Wingeier's book, which may be ordered through a local bookstore or directly from the publisher. Class participants would also benefit from having their own copy of the book.

LOVING YOURSELF, LOVING OTHERS is a six-session course developed by Dr. Jeffrey Pulling and based on John Powell's book *THE SECRET OF STAYING IN LOVE* (Argus Communications, 1974). The aim of this course is to assist participants in exploring self-love and love of others. The six sessions follow the six chapters of the Powell book. Some of the ideas examined are acting out lack of self-esteem, attempts to escape from reality and pain, what love is, the counterfeits of love, how love works, the importance of dialogue, and the importance of expressing emotions. Throughout the course the participants are asked to apply Powell's insights to their own life experience.

All participants will need their own copy of Powell's book, which may be ordered through a local bookstore or directly from the publisher. Study guides for both leader and participants are available for $3.00 each from Samaritan Extended Studies. These study guides will assist students in their pre-class reading and suggest the kind of discussion and sharing to go on in class. Students interested in earning Samaritan credit for this course may enroll in it as a correspondence course. Cost is $35.00, which indludes textbook, study guide and test for each of the six lessons, grading of tests and awarding of credit upon successful completion of the course.

Orders for all of these adult educational materials should be sent to Samaritan Extended Studies, 11 Columbia Street, Hartford, CT 06106. Orders must be pre-paid and in U.S. funds. All prices include postage and handling. Checks or money orders should be payable to *Samaritan Extended Studies*.

continued from page 17

The good news is that God is faithful, and cares for us as a nursing mother. God will not forget us.

And the good news that the apostle Paul shares with us is that Christ allows even us to share in the mercy of God, and that it is not up to us to figure out God, or to boast. It is through faith that we are made right with God and through no prideful power of ours. Rather, trust in God's mercy, and live accordingly.

Amen.

continued from page 15

9) WANTING TOO MUCH - Do not set goals we cannot reach with normal effort. Do not expect too much. It's always great when good things you were not expecting happen. You will get what you are entitled to as long as you do your best, but maybe not as soon as you think you should. We learn to recognize the difference between wants and needs.

10) FORGETTING GRATITUDE - We check our mental attitude by asking ourselves if we are grateful for being substance free. If we are thankful, we have a healthy attitude and remember how it was. If we are not, we have forgotten where we came from and are headed back.

11) "IT CAN'T HAPPEN TO ME" - This is dangerous thinking. Almost anything can happen to us and is more likely if we get careless. Remember we have a progressive disease, and we will be in worse shape if we relapse.

The key to really helping anyone who has a substance abuse problem is to remember that the problem is not in the substance itself but the underlying emotional inability to effectively face reality. Keep in mind that each person is unique, and in recognizing this, you must be careful not to try to solve the problem but to help the individual come to some conclusions about solving the problem. You don't have to be trained professionally to be concerned and that concern can heop lead that person to further professional help.

fellowship news
our journey

MCC-LONG BEACH FINDS NEW BUILDING

MCC Long Beach, wandering "in the wilderness" since September of 1982, has purchased a new building. The building, a landmark in the city of Long Beach, was available for $98,000 because it needed seismic renovations. The 12,000-square-foot building is located at 1231 Locust in Long Beach (cross street - Anaheim).

MCC Long Beach had sold its previous building in September of 1982 because, according to Pastor Dusty Pruitt, "We had outgrown the building. It's a maxim in church administration that churches will increase to 80% of their building capacity and then won't grow any more. We had an average of 180 in our old building, which seated 225, for more than five years. This new building will seat 400 comfortably and there is room to take out some walls and with minor variations we could comfortably seat 500."

The new building, an old labor temple, needs a good coat of paint and some elbow grease before it will be ready for use, as it stood unoccupied for two years. Escrow is due to close on July 8th.

"We hope to close early," Pruitt said. "July 8th is CCCC meeting in Toronto. However, if early closing is impossible, I'm sure they don't need me to close escrow."

"The seismic problems of the building have been taken care of and the building is up to seismic code until January, 1984. Then this building and all other buildings so coded will have to have some structural things done to it. We're looking at between $25,000 and $60,000 worth of work to bring it up to 1991 earthquake standards," Pruitt said.

RUSSIAN RIVER MCC FINDS NEW HOME

Russian River MCC is on the move! Services are now being held at the Guerneville Community Church on Armstrong Woods Road.

Rev. Robert Jones was recently asked about the possibility of the infant congregation's use of the Guerneville Community Church sanctuary. At the outset Jones felt good about such an arrangement. Their Board of Trustees and the Board of Deacons voted unanimously in favor of the proposal. However, these Boards felt it their obligation to put this request to a vote before their entire congregation. Rev. John I. Torres met with the elected church officials of GCC to present an introduction of Russian River MCC, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and some details of his credentials as a clergyperson of the denomination. After a pleasant and informative discussion arrangements were resolved. The ultimate decision was to be decided by the Guerneville Community Church on April 24, 1983.

The congregation of the Guerneville Community Church voted unanimously for Russian River MCC to use both the sanctuary and fellowship hall! God's love is alive at the Russian River!

We'd like for you to join us in saluting the good and gentle people of the Guerneville Community Church and their pastor Rev. Robert Jones. We'd like to also express our gratitude for the generosity of the Woods Resort - to the owners, Carl, Gene and Al and to their staff. Russian River MCC would not exist without the love and concerns of friends such as these.

Please be informed and share the news that Russian River MCC is now meeting at the Gureneville Community Church on Armstrong Woods Road at noon every Sunday.

We will be combining the August and September issues of *JOURNEY* in order to give you complete General Conference coverage. This will be an expanded version.

Rev. (Captain) Dusty Pruitt

Rev. (Captain) Dusty Pruitt, pastor of MCC Long Beach, is being represented by the ACLU Foundation in a suit they filed in Federal District Court. The suit seeks to declare unconstitutional regulations set by the U.S. Armed Forces which call for mandatory discharge of homosexuals.

These regulations define homosexual as "anyone who engages in, desires to engage in or intends to engage in homosexual act."

The ACLU Foundation contends that the regulations violate First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and association by allowing for the discharge of an individual purely on the basis of thoughts, speech or status and not because of any prohibited conduct or failure to properly perform military duties.

Pruitt came under investigation after the publication of an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*. She was due for a promotion to the rank of major, but that promotion has been suspended.

In 1981, the Army discharged 252 soldiers for "homosexual tendencies," excluding overt acts.

Pruitt is being represented by ACLU Foundation attorney Susan McGreivy, legal Director Fred Okrand and volunteer attorney William G. Smith.

James Thomas Atkinson

WAKE FOREST, NC - James Thomas Atkinson of Kenly, N.C. was among 197 graduates during recent commencement exercises at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here. He received the Master of Divinity degree and is a student clergy at St. John's MCC in Raleigh, N.C.

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Picture of Toronto which appeared in the May *JOURNEY* was taken by the *Toronto Star*.

MCC IN THE VALLEY CELEBRATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY

In October of 1972 a group of far-sighted men and women decided that the San Fernando Valley needed an MCC, closer to their homes. They began to meet and the church was actually chartered in March of 1973, 10 years ago. The early church met at a member's home, then at the Northridge Unitarian Church, and also at a synagogue in North Hollywood. Finally, with enough attending to pay regular rent, the group rented a space in North Hollywood on Victory Boulevard, made the old warehouse presentable, and remained there from September 1973 until November 1977.

At that time the membership had grown to the point where worshippers were sitting on the floor. The church found its present home, at that time an American Legion Hall, raised funds, and bought the building. The first service was held there on Thanksgiving Day in 1977.

In its early history the church had worship coordinators, including the Rev. Richard Hetz, followed by John Roe as pastor. Rev. Randy Cypherd then served as pastor for many years as the congregation grew. Many of the present licensed clergy in the Fellowship attended the Valley church at one time, including Alice Jones, Candace Naisbitt, Fred Conwell, Roger Webb, Jim Harris and Peter Riley. Rev. Jim Glyer, Rev. Bob Twar and Rev. Jean Hart served as assistant pastors at different times.

The church has now grown to approximately 250 members and continues to steadily grow. Rev. Kenneth Martin now serves as pastor, with two student clergy; Ruby Grammar and Val Burke. The Valley church is presently undergoing extensive renovation which will add seating for another 60 people and will also include a new heating and cooling system as well as redecorating.

The Tenth Anniversary Dinner was held on April 7 with 170 attending. The buffet was catered by the Touch of Class restaurant and was probably the most superb feast ever encountered by the parisioners! Honored guests included almost half the original Charter Members, Rev. Randy Cypherd, Rev. Richard Hetz and the guest speaker, Dr. Norman Pittinger, professor at Kings College, Cambridge, England, theologian and noted author.

(One week later the Rev. Richard Hetz, who has been active now for years with the West Hollywood Presbyterian congregation, was murdered in his home in Silverlake. The suspect, who also stole the car, was apprehended by police. A memorial service was held at the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church.)

classifieds

WANTED

Preludes (for piano) based on hymns in MCC Hymnal or on your favorite hymns. These will be published in a collection available at nominal cost to Fellowship churches. Please write down your music neatly in black ink since we will not recopy it. Send to: L. Israel, MCC Harrisburg, P.O. Box 3897, Harrisburg, PA 17105.

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Clockwise From Upper Left: Avanelle Smith and Rev. Hans Holborn of Valley Interfaith Council.

Pastor Ken Martin displays certificate from Los Angeles City Council commemorating anniversary.

Anxious attendees prepare to attack buffet table.

Lay Assistant David Lyon, former Pastor Randy Cypherd, and Rev. Jim Dykes enjoy head table fellowship.

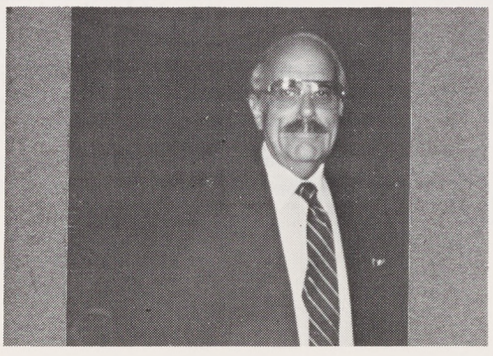
Rev. Dykes, LeRoy Dysart, Board Member Dick Follett, and Attorney Al Gordon of Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians.

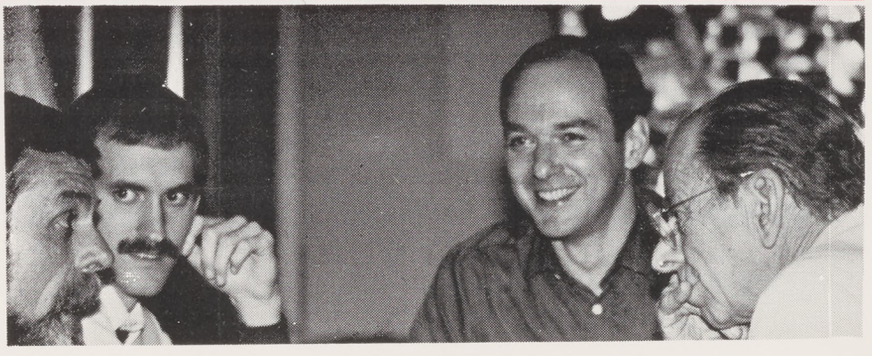
Rev. Richard Hetz, an early Pastor (see article).

Rev. Dr. Norman Pittinger, featured speaker.

"Wall of Pictures" depicting the 10 year history of MCC in the Valley (Peter, photographer).

MCC
IN THE
VALLEY





A Personal Testimony

Demonstration in Joplin, MO

by Sam Edelman
Clergyperson

It started out to be just a visit. Free time on one's hands is an unfamiliar burden to any pastor. Both rumor and direct report had told me that our church group in Joplin, MO had faltered. I knew there had been some public pressure with a grand jury investigation of an alleged homosexual prostitution ring several months ago. The church had suffered a fire, had moved and had seemed to quietly die.

On the first decent week-end in April, I went to round up some old friends, familiar hugs, perhaps to encourage those who remained from the church, and to determine if help could be given them.

Three and a half hours from home, a different world awaited. Seated in a comfortable living room, a college professor and a retired school teacher began to catalogue the abuse and harassment which had occurred since losing their pastor to resignation and their building to fire.

The acts had not been directed at MCC, but, rather, at the entire community. Publicity, exposure and the threat of exposure had been, as always, the primary weapons. Eighteen indictments had been handed down, 11 were dropped for lack of evidence; seven persons were imprisoned.

The results were a fracturing of the community, some seeking to withdraw only into anonymity, others willing to risk everything if only there were leadership. The church was not immune to the division: attendance had been low, then non-existent.

I was handed a crudely lettered flyer announcing a picket that evening from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. in front of the local bar. A phone call with an MCC person, whose business partner had just been sentenced to seven years in prison, asked if I could be present at a press conference. The local, self-appointed leader "has a way of saying things no one wants to hear, putting his foot in his mouth," I was told. "We need someone calm and articulate."

So I dressed, in spite of the other call which warned me not to wear a clerical collar because it would target me for violence. I accepted the risk and went to the site.

At 5 p.m., as the protestors gathered, they seemed to be a genuinely motley crew of seven adults and two pre-schoolers. Without attempting to exaggerate or to be cruel, the two women who were passing out signs, handling the megaphone and shouting to passers-by, appeared to have stepped out of the pages of "Southern Sleaze." I was much reminded of Pat Parker's comment, "Sister, your foot may be smaller, but it is still on my neck."

One, bleached-blonde, the other with a mass of Clairol-Jet-Black-Hair piled high atop her head, wore heels and too-tight, too-long, K-Mart designer jeans. They reeked of "redneck."

The men, whose Banlon shirts didn't quite reach the top of their Levi's to cover their protruding bellies, were quiet for the most part. One was in complete military fatigue outfit, from the top of the properly-perched hat to his polished boots. He didn't carry a sign. His job appeared to be to stand aloof and look menacing. He did a good job of it.

We and the curiosity seekers and the police gathered in the parking lot across the street to read the signs and watch the activity. "IF YOUR NOT QUEER MARCH HERE," "QUEERS GOT BAD BLOOD," "QUEERS GO IN THE CLOSET," "PROTECT OUR KIDS," "A.I.D.S. DOOMS BABIES."

Hand-lettered, semi-literate, the primitive signs outnumbered the protestors . . . for a while.

It was a numbing roar which announced the arrival of the motorcyclists. In black leather and long, ill-kempt hair, the six cyclists raced up Main Street, parking their bikes in front of the protestors. One swung the woman on the rear of his bike atop his shoulder, then delved into the box of signs, coming up with one sign that said "CLEAN UP JOPLIN." She grabbed the one that said "ARE KIDS SAFE DOWNTOWN?" The irony was lost on them, but not on the spectators.

Noisy, already shouting "Fags make me gag," before the cacophony of the cycles had died down, the cyclists preened before the press which converged on the spectable, cameras clicking.

Before the evening had started, the bar owner had rented two 24-foot cab-over U-Haul trucks and had parked them immediately in front of the bar. The protestors had been limited to marching in front of a furniture store and a school of hair design. The police invoked a 15-minute parking rule and the trucks were removed. The cyclists were not so bothered.

Moving inside the bar, I found Terry Murphy, the self-styled political leader being cloistered in a dim hallway. In a chemically-induced stupor, he was making loud declarations about his absence of fear and his intentions to clear the street. The bar owner and two friends were trying to penetrate the chemical fog with reason and rationality. They weren't getting far. Despairing, they turned him over to me.

Samaritan

General Conference offers a most ideal opportunity for all members of the Fellowship attending to become better acquainted with Samaritan. Bruce Kassalow of the Resident College will be available in Toronto to dispense any information requested.

Samaritan is thirteen years old, yet so many members of UFMCC know little or nothing about their school. The unique courses of study being offered in Los Angeles make Samaritan absolutely one school of a kind.

Why not take the time to come to know Samaritan during this General Conference? Those unable to consider attending school might, instead, desire to join the growing list of the friends of Samaritan. Find out how wonderful it feels to harmonize spiritually with UFMCC's educational ministries.

Samaritan wishes UFMCC a glorious General Conference.

"See if you can do something with him. He has a good heart; he just doesn't understand what he's doing," they said.

I physically pinned Terry in a booth and made him talk. Vacillating between rage and tears, he rambled about injustice and name-calling and the absence of fairness. I tried to talk strategy and political wisdom and acknowledgement of his pain.

We finally wandered outside to observe the pickets again. I held Terry tightly by the arm, knowing he was as controllable as quicksilver and much more volatile.

In the parking lot, confrontation was building as supporters and onlookers began playing "Dodge-'Em" with their cars. Parked diagonally, horizontally, in parallel and in chaos, tempers began to flare with the logistics of coming and going. Terry had returned and his car rested less than four inches from the door of the pick-up truck owned by one of the protest leaders. Name-calling and threats took on new dimensions as detectives watched.

Terry jogged across the street. I shouted for assistance. I ran after him, and using a technique taught me by an older brother, I block-tackled him, sprawling us both in the gravel lot. The nicest thing Terry called me was "conservative!"

Terry became calmer as we stood against the cars, watching the photographers and motorcyclists and protestors play out their roles. After several quiet moments, Terry turned to me, tears running down his face, asking, "How's Jonny?" That was the first I knew that Terry had encountered one of my student clergy, Jon Miller. Terry cried and told me of this beautiful man who had sincerely cared and understood him. I silently thanked God for the ministry of Jon Miller. He had unknowingly provided at least one sane moment in this circus.

I left Terry to two friends and returned to the bar. Inside, the small crowd either ignored the exterior events or wandered from doorway to doorway to watch the scene outside.

Unfamiliar faces, unknown entities, approached me to declare that they rarely came to the bar, but had come out this night as a moral stand, a show of support. Others wanted to know where MCC was located, or what time services began. With empty hands and empty gestures, I could only tell them that MCC was not now operating in Joplin. I offered them hope that it soon would be different and tried to refer them to Springfield or Fayetteville.

Some insisted that MCC was needed "here, in Joplin, now." "This has been going on for nine months now," one said. "The church was a stabilizing influence in this town." "We really need one here." "I didn't go much, but I really miss it."

Someone else needed to talk about a custody battle. Another had questions about Holy Union. A former MCC board member talked of frustration, discouragement, too few to carry the load, no clergy, the burn-out. My heart heard them all.

Outside Terry managed to slip away from his protectors again, borrowing the friend's camera, he knelt before a child to take a picture of her sign. The mother shoved him away; he shoved back, finally finding the fight for which he had been looking. The melee was short-lived as the camera was smashed into a dozen pieces and the police drug Terry's unaccomodating body to the waiting patrol car.

One of the now-brazen protestors swung open the far door and punched the closest by-stander in the face. The police took him away, too. The score didn't feel even.

continued on page 30

AVE

I got a vision of who I might have been
had I not declared myself
one of my Church's queers
or a house faggot for the English profession:

A quiet, arthritic old Episcopalian
winked at me from his pew
where he knelt before Mary,
having come from tea after his lecture
on the rhetoric of *Bleak House*;
and I recognized him,
saw myself as I would have been,
and thanked him for affirming
my sacrifice of him,
my shrill declaration that I kept him
from ever becoming more
than a figment of my imagination.

Louie Crew

MARGARET GANNON
BORN JUNE 3, 1916
DIED MARCH 22, 1983

Margaret Gannon, known to her friends and loved ones as Peggy, died March 22, 1983 after a long fight with cancer and a heart condition.

Peggy was born in England and came to the United States when she was six years old. She had been married and had two daughters and at the time of her death she had 13 grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

Peggy and her spouse, Ruth Favel, were involved in the first attempts in 1976-1977 to start an MCC in Flint, Michigan. The group stopped meeting in early 1977, but the desire for a church in Flint never left Peggy.

In 1979 Peggy was admitted to the hospital in serious condition and doctors said that if she recovered she would be confined to a wheelchair the rest of her life. A call was placed to MCC Detroit for someone to serve Peggy communion. Deacon candidate Lin Stoner answered that request and shared the sacraments with Peggy, Ruth and Earl Kalbfleisch.

Peggy had always wanted the church to grow and on April 13, 1980 that desire became reality as Redeemer MCC held its first meeting with three people and Lin and her spouse, Shirley, conducting the service.

In August 1980 the group was officially recognized as a study group and on October 12, 1980 Peggy Gannon was one of the first 12 members received into the group by Stoner who was then worship coordinator of Redeemer MCC.

Peggy started attending the group in a wheelchair and the group prayed for Peggy's health. Soon she was using a walker, then a cane, and within a few months she could out dance the other people at Redeemer's first fund raiser.

At the time of Peggy's death Redeemer is a mission with 47 active members.

In loving memory of Peggy Gannon, Redeemer named April, 1983 as the Margaret "Peggy" Gannon Memorial Fund month with a goal of $5,000 being received toward the purchase of a building.

The group's goal is to have its own building by November, 1983 and celebrate Christmas in its own church home.

Peggy dared to ask God for the desires of her heart and God answered. We at Redeemer are thankful for the time with Peggy in our midst for we learned that in our weaknesses we are made strong because of God's love and grace and mercy. Peggy will be missed. It is time to pick up the challenge and go on. Peggy's last words were "You must be tough, you must be strong, Flint needs the church."

Commission On The Laity

by Jackie Walker
Assistant Chair
Commission on the Laity

Most of the Commission on the Laity was in Ft. Lauderdale in February for a Government Structures and Systems meeting. We took that opportunity to meet as a Commission.

We set up a procedure for electing the new chair and assistant chair of the COL. Elections will take place at General Conference in Toronto. Nominations will be taken at the Open Forum for the Laity to be held on Monday morning. Nominations will also be taken from the floor of the business meeting on the day the elections are held. Voting will be done by secret ballot at the same time the Elders' elections are held. Elections will be held at least two days after the nominations are taken. A forum will be scheduled to enable nominees to answer questions before the elections.

COL passed a resolution which we will be presenting to General Conference. The resolution deals with the issue of lay people consecrating communion. We feel that in many parts of the Fellowship the laity are already consecrating communion. We are hoping to "give permission" to something that is already being practiced.

As previously mentioned, there will be an Open Forum for the Laity on Monday. This forum will be similar to the one we held in Houston two years ago. There will be an opportunity for anyone who wishes to speak to do so. We won't have a pre-planned agenda; we encourage people to take this opportunity to speak on any interest or concern.

We hope that a time has been set aside at General Conference for lay delegates to caucus. The COL would like to encourage lay delegates to caucus on a district level. The Great Lakes District did this in Houston and found it helpful.

The COL is asking General Conference to seat lay representatives and assistant lay district coordinators as official observers.

The commission voted to recommend to districts that only lay delegates attending district conference be allowed to vote for the district lay representative.

The COL hopes to become a clearing house for materials and resources on the laity. We would like to develop a system for sharing and developing materials for and about lay people. ■

continued from page 11

sermon by UFMCC founder, the Rev. Troy D. Perry.

In late business on Friday, the National Council overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for "substantially increased funds and a high priority for research and information on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and AIDS-related diseases." The resolution goes on to direct Council leaders "to inform the President of the United States, Members of Congress, the National Institute of Health and the Center for Disease Control of this action."

The resolution also encourages "the public news services to provide wider dissemination of *responsible* information concerning AIDS." It directs NCCC leadership to "monitor this issue and be an advocate for public information and humane policies concerning AIDS." ■

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The young man with the camera pieces leaned on the pool table and wept over his demolished Christmas gift. He then asked if I knew Rev. Donna Vinson and he told of his love for her and his struggle with drugs and her constant, loving patience. He spoke, too, of Rev. Joe Gilbert and days gone by and the people he had needed so much.

In the next room as we waited for the 10 p.m. news coverage, another young man approached and asked if I knew Rev. John Barbonne and Rev. Fred Conwell. He told of a year's unemployment, returning to Joplin to seek work, living with his parents, saying, "I'm 31, you know, so this is really hard. I need the church here."

His voice faded as the newscasters began to document the night's activities. In all, we survived it well. The coverage was reasonably balanced and fair. A sigh went up, then a cheer, as the bar owner, Billy Kuykendall, tap-danced on the bar.

"We Are Family" began to play through the speakers and the dance floor began to fill with persons worried, harried, and yet happy. It wasn't exactly a victory party, yet it was an affirmation of people who refused to give in or give up, despite the battering. They knew it wasn't over. But then, is it ever?

An absent church, an unfillable void, a people in need, yet a people who shared the memory of better days, a people gathered from many places who were stronger because of what MCC had been to them – all of these crowded a Joplin Saturday night.

I had talked with most of the remnant of MCC before I left the next day. Unanimous in their agreement of need for the church, yet knowing their own limits to provide for that need, they had no answers.

Needed: a leader; a strong leader; a commmitted leader; one who can survive in a depressed economy; working in a battered community; able to overcome fears and reluctance inside the community, and outright hostility from the outside community; one who can sleep at night, knowing the Klan doesn't; one who will not balk at the immensity of the task; and one who will cry at the sight of a four-year-old on a downtown sidewalk, holding a sign saying "WOULDN'T YOU KILL MAD DOGS?" Bigotry and hatred start early here.

But inside a bar there is a community of people who have touched MCC and have been touched by MCC. They can call the names of the persons and places which made a difference in their lives. The very act of touching had left them better and more determined. They are looking to us, for just one – just one, called and chosen and committed to the impossible.

Soon, Lord, I pray, soon.

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continued from page 11

of rejection and alienation?

If the Church does nothing else in this whole process, it ought to confess that it has been absolutely bankrupt when it comes to pastoral ministry to and with Gay men and Lesbians. Most Gay men and Lesbians in most traditional Christian churches have really only one of two options. Some take the option of living a double life, concealing their sexual identity and staying in the church. They choose to live a lie and live in hypocrisy.

Many others take the second option, developing their own personal theology which goes something like this: "I know that God has created me, I know that God loves me, yet the church rejects me so to hell with the church." Then, they leave the church. By the thousands they have come to the UFMCC.

You need to know that simple pronouncements that homosexuality is sin according to your interpretation of Biblical proof texts or your point of view regarding the order of Creation do not provide the foundation for effective pastoral ministry to Gay men and Lesbians. The problem with such pronouncements is that they deny too many facts, not the least of which is the day-to-day life experience of Gay men and Lesbians.

The bankruptcy experienced in the church with regard to pastoral care for and with Gay men and Lesbians finds its genesis in ignorance and fear.

I am very concerned about the lack of information that so many of you have on the subject of homosexuality and of recent Biblical scholarship on the issue. Most knowledge about the issue of homosexuality is less than three decades old and most of the excellent Biblical scholarship on the subject is less than five years old. Consequently it has not found its way into many of your churches.

For instance, there is a growing body of Biblical study that acknowledges the scripture is silent on the issue of homosexual *orientation* and it rarely speaks to the issue of homosexual *behavior* and only then regarding selected forms of such *behavior*. Some Biblical scholars now conclude that the often quoted proof texts which presumably condemn homosexuality, in fact, refer to specific behaviors such as cult prostitution, sexual violence, active and passive male prostitution and homosexual conduct by individuals assumed to be heterosexual.

It is well accepted today that sexual orientation is not a matter of simple moral choice. It is much more complex than that.

With regard to your comments on theological anthropology we would like to take exception to the viewpoints of some.

It is in our capacity to love that we are created in the image of God. The unique dimension in human sexuality is its powerful capacity to express love in and through a sexual relationship.

If one sees only "heterosexual duality as evidence of the divine image in humankind" one imposes a terribly limited view of creation's order. It seems to me that such a viewpoint ignores the fact that God makes room for the exceptions. In the sense that most people, some 90% in our society, are heterosexual, heterosexuality may be seen as a numerical norm. Are the rest of us not created by God? Are we any less of God's creation? No, God makes room for the exceptions, whether barren women, eunuchs, or a celibate apostle, or *homosexuals*. God makes room for the exceptions. Why shouldn't the Church make room also?

When you make simple pronouncements based upon your view of scripture or your view of theological anthropology and ignore the facts of experience and of recent scholarship you impose on Gay men and Lesbians a burden of guilt for that over which they have absolutely no control, their sexual orientation.

You may talk about compassion and you may talk about justice to relieve the oppression that Gay men and Lesbians experience, but nothing is more oppressive to me than to be told that it's O.K. to be Gay as long as I never express my sexuality. That does not come to me as good news. You may not be prepared to accept us into membership yet but I urge you to get to know us better. I urge you to become informed on the issues. Every week a new MCC congregation is being established somewhere in this world and invariably it is being established because people are being turned away from your churches. I urge you to give us good news to take back to them.

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continued from page 7

the witness that he will continue to be in this life.

We have the TV documentary that he was such a part of, that he poured his life blood into it, and it will touch millions of lives. People who are still in their closets are going to be touched by the life and the vision of Greg Cutts.

Yes, and by the story of this denomination but by the vision this young man saw and the talent that God had given him to put it on film. Your story, my story, the story that will unlock closet doors, and prison doors, all around the world. God let us use Greg. I'm so grateful for that use. God talks to us in such beautiful ways. Reading from II Corinthians, 4:) Troy, family and friends; 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. Knowing that God which raised up Jesus Christ will raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many resound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward self perish, yet the inward spirit is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

We have had a glimpse of something wonderful and rare in Greg Cutts. You will have memories that will last you the rest of your lives. And it will be the things that will be unseen that will live with you in your life, Troy. And God has said that God will always be with you. That in those times when you stumble God will lift you up. That the two sets of footprints in the sand that suddenly become one are because you have fallen and Christ is carrying you. There will be three sets of footprints because Greg Cutts will walk beside you and with you for the rest of your life.

We are troubled on every side but we are not defeated. Most certainly not by death because Jesus Christ gave us that victory over that lie of Satan that we may rejoice today. We still have the questions but Greg Cutts has the answers and he is waiting for us to take the quiz because he is going to give them to us when we get there. Amen.

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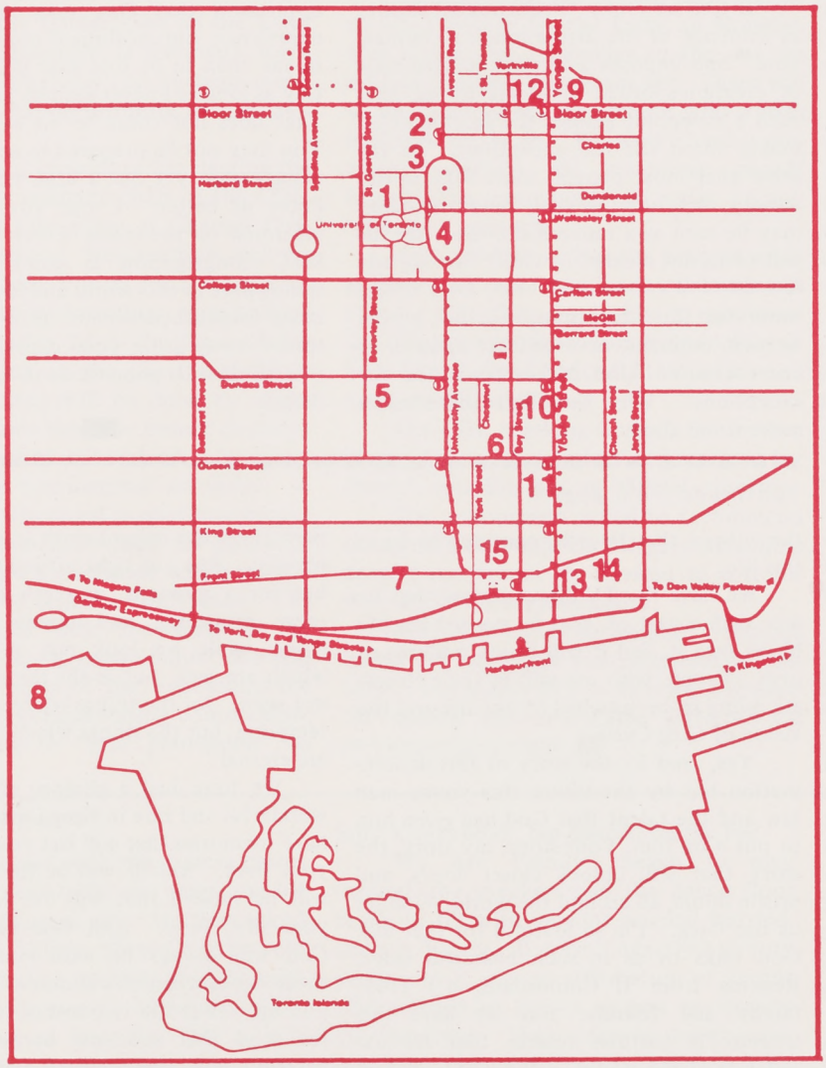

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